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F. SHEARMAN,

Newsagent, Tobacconist & Confectioner,

229, WHITTINGTON ROAD, N. 22.


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HARVEST IN POLAND

By GEOFFREY DENNIS

MARY LEE

"*Mary Lee* is a book that is made by the union of mordant irony with passionate idealism, a combination of two phases of a force which enables the author to gather up an immense amount of detailed material, to utilize every fragment of it towards the structure of a profound purpose.

Mary Lee is so real a person that it is impossible to think of the author as a man. She wrote this book in her heart's blood; 'Geoffrey Dennis' merely edited it."—*Spectator*.

LONDON

WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.

1.
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POLAND

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PERSONS IN THE STORY

EMMANUEL LEE . . . *The narrator.*

MISS CALMADY.

NELLIE O'BRIEN . . . *A medium.*

MRS. DOBSON DREW.

MR. QUINCE . . . *A famous medium.*

IVAN DE CZELTEN . . . *Of Magdalen, Oxford.*

PRINCE JULIAN LELEWEL.

WERONIKA *His sister.*

COUNTESS OSTOWSKA . . . *His father's mother ('The Grand-mother').*

MME. TANSKA *His mother ('The Generaless').*

KLEMENTYNA *His half-sister ('The Canoness').*

SEBASTYAN *His cousin.*

KAROL *His friend.*

BETHLEHEM *His bastard half-brother.*

EMILE. *His chauffeur.*

ZWAN.

NOTE.—None of the persons in this story is, or is intended to be, a real person.—G. D.

CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I. BIRMINGHAM—THE FIRST WARNING . . . | I |
| II. LICHFIELD—THE SECOND WARNING . . . | 22 |
| III. FAINT BEGINNINGS OF FULFILMENT . . . | 50 |
| IV. OXFORD | 57 |
| V. PARIS | 78 |
| VI. ACROSS EUROPE—ROLLS ROYCE . . . | 99 |
| VII. Breslau | 112 |
| VIII. ACROSS EUROPE—THIRD-CLASS CARRIAGE . . | 122 |
| IX. HATE CASTLE | 129 |
| X. CLEVEREST LIVING POLE | 154 |
| XI. POLISH MOTHER, POLISH SAINT, POLISH GRANDMOTHER | 174 |
| XII. THE COSSACKS ARE COMING ! . . . | 189 |
| XIII. ZWAN SONG | 204 |
| XIV. STIGMATA | 208 |
| XV. HARVEST HOME—THE LORD'S . . . | 230 |
| XVI. WARSAW—THE LAST WARNING . . . | 240 |
| XVII. FEAR CASTLE | 251 |
| XVIII. THE TERROR BY NIGHT . . . | 261 |
| XIX. THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW . . . | 287 |
| XX. HARVEST HOME—THE DEVIL'S . . . | 297 |

CHAPTER I: BIRMINGHAM—THE FIRST WARNING

March 8th, 1923.

Ten years ago, on the eighth day of March of the thirteenth year of the present century, being the last year of the Great Peace, I was seated in a train which was speeding through Arden, through the spring fields of Shakespeare's England.

It was the last day of Oxford Hilary Term, and I was on my way to take up a post at King James' School, Birmingham.

Although not interestingly poor, I had not the means to live my Oxford life without a certain amount of pinching, and was glad, therefore, to get vacation work. The present post had been secured through the good offices of an old cousin of my father's, Miss Calmady, who lived in Birmingham, and who was also a cousin of the headmaster's, though the latter was no relative of mine. An outbreak of influenza had mown down half the teaching staff, including the two history masters, and at that awkward end-of-term moment the headmaster had found his normal means of sudden recruitment—the Scholastic Agencies, those pedagogic pandars, those scholastic bawds, that find wicked old schools for teachers and fresh young teachers for the schools—unequal to his need, unable, naturally enough, at a moment's notice to stock all influenza'd England with the temporary teachers for whom she cried. So when Miss Calmady spoke of 'my clever young cousin,' Dr. Baring clutched at the straw.

Request and reply, and the thing was arranged. I undertook to give special tutoring to a few boys reading for history scholarships at Oxford, who would work with me throughout the school holidays.

These were still ahead, and I had not thought to go to Birmingham until a week or two after the beginning of the Oxford vacation. But a last-moment letter, followed by a wire, announced further casualties on the staff, and asked me if, in addition to this tutorial work, I would undertake ordi-

nary teaching duties in the upper school for the last ten days of the school term.

The prospect was frightening. Though I had passed my twenty first birthday, I looked two or even three years younger and for that reason among others dreaded mass contact with what, from my own school memories, I conceived to be one of the cruellest species of the animal kingdom : the human boy. Upper school : what hairy Black Country brutes they would be. How they would mock my infrequent beard. On the other hand, that ten days' terror would be paid for, paid for with golden sovereigns, stamped with the King's head. So I telegraphed ' Coming immediately,' and the morrow saw me on my Great Western way.

Miss Calmady had generously offered to put me up. I spent a peaceful Sunday at her little Edgbaston villa.

My experiences of class teaching proved less dour than fear had foreshadowed, and I soon got the brutes (they were friendly brutes) well in hand, deciding, as the end-of-term spirit was abroad, to make my path easy by amusing rather than instructing them. Real hard work, however, was entailed by my scholarship classes in history and political science. Myself not much more than half way through Oxford, I found that my four boys had read, in some fields, quite as much as I had myself, and that it meant nightly reading to keep a pace ahead of them ; so what with work all day and, after a game of *bézique* with Miss Calmady, work for the rest of the evening, I had no time heavy on my hands. Assuredly none for brooding, on this world or another.

The Birmingham district I already knew. After leaving school, and before going to Oxford, I had been put into business for three years at Walsall, a town in which I had made many friends. The chief friend of my Walsall days, however, a Mrs. Dobson Drew, the widow of an old acquaintance of my mother's, had recently moved to the neighbouring little city of Lichfield. I had written telling her that I was staying in Birmingham, and in reply she had kindly asked me over to stay with her for Easter. As my scholarship class, though working through the school holidays, was allowed a few days off for the Easter festival, I gladly accepted ; arranging to go to Lichfield on the Thursday.

On the preceding afternoon, the Wednesday, when I got back to Miss Calmady's after school, I found my old cousin seated by the drawing-room fire.

With staccato clearness I still hear, or believe I hear, her friendly casual 'By the way': the three words that are the beginning of this story.

"By the way, Emmanuel—I've a friend coming round to tea."

"A friend?" (I suppose I said.)

"Why did you say 'a friend' like that?"

"Like what?"

"Oddly, you said it."

"Sorry. Did I?"—for the fleetingest second of time feeling a cold waft from the Darkness in my heart, beholding the Place where I had been in the moment my voice had uttered the two words; forgetting it again even before I spoke.

"You did. Of course, you needn't bother to sit with us afterwards if it wouldn't interest you, or if you have to work. Though I'd rather like you to talk to Nellie a bit."

"Nellie?"

"Nellie O'Brien, housekeeper to old Mr. Milton the solicitor, who lives down the road. She got her present place through my help, and is kindness itself to me. She often comes for a chat over a cup of tea. Of course, she is not exactly what some people would call a lady, but she is the best of women all the same, and so original and amusing. And she's a great hand at thought-reading and seeing the future."

The odd turn of a moment before was forgotten, and I had been listening with no special interest to my cousin's remarks; but the insincere manner, so unlike her, with which she rounded off the last sentence, and a little laugh that followed—an 'I'm not quite such a silly old wife as to believe in such nonsense, mark you!' kind of laugh—at once awakened me, word by word back to her opening phrase sent swift retrospective ears. Poor By-the-way stood naked; then garmented for a trice with fear; then naked again.

"What do you mean? How does she do it?" I asked aggressively. "By phrenology? Or table-turning? Or spiritualism?" I added, uttering as with expert's glibness three vague words that called up three vaguer ideas.

Ideas with which, as it happened, I had never had even a children's-party measure of concrete acquaintance, and in which I had at no time nor in any way been interested ; being, therefore, as touching my claims to be held a reliable narrator of all that is to follow, less than the least of those pro-spiritualist pamphleteers, who, before going to their first séance, or tasting their first otherworld experience, seem always to have made profound, nay well-nigh mythical study of the subject, and, as the result thereof, to be definitely ' hostile ' : this to persuade the reader that they are impartial, and—by drumming it in his ears that all their anterior sympathies were against the Great Truth they are about to expound—to cozen, cajole, wheedle, win him.

My own position was, indeed, the exact opposite. First, I felt hazily that there might be ' something in ' the spook and table business. Second, I knew nothing whatsoever about it, and took no more interest in it than in a hundred and one other important and unimportant things—such as the facts and phenomena of physical science ; mechanical inventions, aeroplanes with all their poetry, motor-cars (except riding in them and their index-numbers : remember that in olden days DF stood for Northampton and BF for Dorset, until Mrs. Grundy, queen of both midland town and southern county, raised clamant voice, and huddling Home Office bowed before the storm, and promulgated coy NH and pure FX instead, though even here the lewd may ferret and find pleasure, if they will) ; the birds and beasts of the field ; music and all sounds ; fishing, fencing, flirting, chess—and less interest, less far, than in (say) European history, foreign politics, our English poetry ; maps, hymns ; the faces of men and women and boys and girls ; the names and colours of the counties of England and provinces of France ; theological niceties and nastinesses, sectarian shades, the exposition of prophecy ; censuses, cricket-averages, swimming, dynasties, poker, honey ; sculpture and all shapes ; roads, female suffrage and rivers ; time and eternity, time-tables and the immortality of the soul. *My soul.*

(This, I hear the reader saying, is your own particular disingenuous little way of pretending to an off-hand impartiality that will, you hope, prejudice me in your favour and earn

anticipatory credence for whatever fables the plain title of your tale may screen. Maybe. Shall I succeed ?)

"Oh, it's nothing really, absolutely nothing!" laughed Miss Calmady, avoiding any answer to my questions, accentuating for a phrase or two her sham lack of enthusiasm for Nellie, and sustaining my interest, which flagged as her insincerity flagged, and as she began to give solemn reasons—reasons are always solemn—for believing in the most absurd prophecies.

"As far as I'm concerned," I said provocatively, "that kind of thing is make-believe: mere filth, mere flim-flam."

"Much of it, I've no doubt. I quite agree. But a hundred impostors don't disprove a thing; they only prove it's something worth counterfeiting." ('Nellie knows,' I heard her whispering under her breath.) "Are you so sure it's quite all make-believe: 'flim-flam'? Have you found *no* evidence, in books or life, to the contrary? (Nellie knows)."

I humoured the good soul, and to please her sent my mind wandering through a chaotic country of half irrelevant childish memories and bookish facts.

Fortune-tellers: long ago a servant of ours in Yorkshire had been to one, who had only told her a lot of nonsense. The Biblical prophecies: these, I admitted, needed a certain amount of getting over, were a tough proposition, even for the subtle stupidity of a Higher Critic. No doubt St. Matthew, in his fatherly Hebrew enthusiasm had overrated the pregnancy of certain Old Testament verses; here and there, perhaps, his 'that-it-might-be-fulfilled' were less clinching, less felicitous than he fancied. Still, most of them, such as those which foreshadowed the principal events of our Lord's life, could not be quite perfectly explained away. Then in profane history—

Here Miss Calmady broke in on my thoughts, or rather, telepathically joined her thoughts to mine. "You're a great historian, Emmanuel. Tell me, aren't there some rather famous instances in history—absolutely proved—of curious prophecies fulfilled?"

"I was just thinking of one. Somewhere in Suetonius there's the well-known story of Augustus Cæsar. When the child Octavius was born, under circumstances which gave no

clue to his future destiny, and when Rome was still Republic, a sorcerer foretold that he would become the Emperor of the world. Then, when he was a grown man, one day he went with Agrippa to consult an astrologer, called Theogenes. Agrippa had his horoscope cast first, and Theogenes prophesied boundless prosperity for him. Octavius, jealous as always—do you know his lips in that boy-face statue?—and fearing that he might hear something less favourable, refused to tell the astrologer the date of his birth, without which, of course, the horoscope couldn't be cast. The magician insisted, and finally Augustus told him. He cast the horoscope, and at once fell at Augustus' feet, worshipping him, crying out : ' You are the future master of the Empire '—there was still no Empire—' You are the future ruler of the earth.' ”

“ But wasn't it Augustus who began his reign by burning the sorcerers ? ”

“ Two thousand of 'em. But the fact that you burn them is, as you said just now when talking about impostors, hardly a proof that you don't believe in them. On the contrary ”—I improvised—“ I expect he feared they would foretell similar good things to other people. So too Tiberius, who learnt much of his destiny from magi, by way of thanks had them hurled from the Capitol. On the other hand, when a wizard told him of the horrible death awaiting him, Nero was probably wise in procuring a speedy and horrible death for the wizard ; it wouldn't have done for his restive subjects to know also. . . . I expect there are plenty of other examples ; the difficulty is, how do we know that they weren't mere lucky shots, the exceptions that disprove the rule ? And the same with the numberless cases in the Middle Ages, of which I know next to nothing, and, in quite modern times, the Empress Eugénie——”

Here, fortunately for my readers, the bell rang, sparing them many tedious details on the Second Empire with which I had recently become acquainted, and on which I should have been by no means reluctant to dilate.

Nellie O'Brien came in. Miss Calmady greeted her, and introduced us. She was a big woman in middle-age, soberly dressed in black, with a square common-sense face and large friendly eyes ; the housekeeper of a stage-play.

Muffins and tea, and a deluge of local gossip.

I ate, and followed my own thoughts ; forgot altogether the supernatural attainments of our guest. Then I became aware that my cousin was making hints. Character-reading was a wonderful gift. Unless it would bore Nellie——. It would interest Mr. Lee so——.

Evidently I was in for it.

My first reaction was funk. Suppose there were really something in the business, and this woman could really 'read' my true character ; and did. That wouldn't do at all.

I remembered my one dim contact with these mysteries. A picnic in Devonshire once ; a shed under the cliff where we were taking shelter from a storm ; a blowsy acquaintance of my sister's who had asked me to produce my palm, the which she had proceeded to spread with flattery an inch thick. As I rehearsed to myself all the beautiful things she had said, her subsequent aside, repeated to me by my faithful sister, ' Your brother *does* rather love being buttered,' though harsh-tasting at the time, in comparison seemed scarce to matter. I was hungry for Nellie's butter ; replete, I could fatly ignore the possible tart asides to Miss Calmady. . . .

Nellie was addressing me.

" You know I am not a spiritualist, Mr. Lee, or anything like that, though I don't say it's clap-trap. All I do is talk, so to speak, a little out of myself. I usually start by telling people about their Characters : mighty unpleasant things very often, or at times funny, but nearly always near the bone, I may say. Then I give them a few Bewares. Next I see things that seem to be happening to them far away, then nearer ; then, sometimes, things that are to happen almost at once. But that is harder. It's as though someone else was talking, not me ; I never remember anything I have said. Sometimes, at the end, I go off into a sort of trance like, but not often."

Miss Calmady and Nellie were sitting one on each side of the fireplace in Chesterfield armchairs. I was in the middle in a Sheraton chair, facing the fire.

" Could I have my cup back, please, Miss Calmady ? " said Nellie. " The leaves give me something to stare at,

and help. That's all there ever was in the tea-leaf business."

It suddenly struck me that the thing was a put-up job between the two of them, a joke at my credulous expense. Ha, ha ! I would show them I was too clever to be taken in so easily.

I turned sharply to Nellie. " You don't know me ? "

" No."

" You've never heard of me ? "

" I knew there was a young Oxford gentleman on a visit to Miss Calmady. Mildred " (the maid) " told me, but nothing more."

" You swear it on your chance of salvation ? "

" I swear."

After five minutes' silence, staring into her tea-cup, Nellie began.

At the risk of enraging the reader, I prefer to reproduce everything she said, though much of it is trivial and most of it, I suppose, irrelevant ; in so far indeed as the several parts of this record pretend to mutual relevance at all, and except that the whole may have a point which the details have not.

All the time Nellie was talking, my old cousin was scribbling away on a writing-block. From her notes she and I later that evening wrote out a full copy in ink, from which I am now (Geneva, 1923) transcribing. This paper I always kept with me until about two years afterwards, when I went abroad on active service. It was then put away with my papers in England until, five years later, in 1920, I returned from the Rhine Army. Consequently—I give these idle details for the benefit of the crabbed and curious who would check me and control—my marginal comments on the rights were all entered either before or after the warring quinquennium, and are so dated. The following is, with trifling exceptions, an exact copy of the actual document in my possession. I omit only what Nellie said about my personal character and tastes (first because it has insufficient bearing on this narrative, second because some of it was so unflatteringly true that I prefer to keep it dark), together with one or two intimate ' prophecies ' concerning friends of mine. The entries in the

left-hand column were copied down the same night. The entries on the right were penned as dated. Words in square brackets [] are not in the original.

CHARACTER, TASTES AND PAST LIFE.

(1) to (9) Omitted.

[What Nellie spoke under these headings was, if my own knowledge of myself is accurate, accurate also. So accurate indeed, in sayings unpleasant and pleasant alike, that in five minutes my suspicious mind reluctantly surrendered; I saw that there was no question of a put-up job. Guessing then? Except that the proportion of bull's-eyes was uncannily high. A few allusions I could not follow, though maybe it was my memory, or vanity, rather than Nellie, that was at fault.]

BEWARES.

(10) "Beware of a fortnight or else three weeks hence. There'll be a crisis in which you will need to be careful, I think illness."

(10) About a fortnight later, Friday, April 4th, 1913, I took to my bed with an attack of flue, not at all serious. I stayed in bed through the week-end, and was all right again on the Monday. But if I had not taken care of myself, it might have forced me to throw up my job; as it was, my Saturday morning classes were the only ones I missed.

(Birmingham,

April, 1913.)

(11) "Beware of a very dark man"—an old stager, this bold brunet—"with curly hair parted in the middle. I think he is a Birmingham man. He is jealous of you."

(12) "Beware of a parson. He looks like a parson."

(a) "I see you talking to him soon in a little room near a church."

(b) "He will ask you two questions, odd questions."

(c) "Don't answer the second question. He's a man to avoid."

(13) There was a long pause. Then Nellie resumed in a graver voice. A chill fell; I stopped smiling. Fool, white-liver! "There is a man, perhaps a foreign man—he's nice though—who is coming to fetch you away, away. He is tall, doesn't seem an enemy, has a pleasant face, pale. Think well before you

(11) S——. A useful Beware, too generously rewarding my parenthetic sneer in opposite column. Forewarned, I refused to fall into the mean trap—[details omitted]—he laid for me; the one evil turn of my Birmingham stay.

(Birmingham,

April 17th, 1913.)

(12)

(a) On the Sunday week following, I was talking to the Rev. R. in the vestry of — Congregational Chapel. The most harmless of men.

(b) ?

(c) ?

(Birmingham,

April 17th, 1913.)

I have since heard that the Rev. R., pacifist, was in trouble during the war; and was therefore much avoided. He has yet to do *me* any harm.

(Glasgow, 1920.)

(13) [See Chapter IV.]

go. I feel—danger ; though I don't know what it is."

I (argumentatively): " I hardly know any foreigners, except a few Germans and Americans at Oxford. *Where's* he coming to visit me ? "

N.: " I can't see."

(14) " If you get back to England all right, learn your lesson, for again they're calling to you to cross the sea, and there's danger again. Listen to those who are trying to dissuade you—I see them talking to you in a garden—and stay here in England."

(14) If Nellie's ' again ' is construed to mean ' next time ' you go abroad, she was not absolutely right here, as the next time I went abroad [that is, after the time which is the theme of this record] was in January last [1914], when I was in Paris studying French history. Here, indeed, I learnt the joys of cold and illness alone in a Latin Quarter garret, joys possibly justifying Nellie's warning ; warning wholly apposite, however, in respect of my *third* project for a foreign trip. When I had taken my Oxford Finals [summer 1914], I decided to go to Berlin for German, and took rooms there as from July 15th. But I was run down with overwork on my Finals, and various relatives and friends did their best to persuade me to abandon, or at any rate postpone, my Berlin plans. The final tussle was with two aunts of mine, when we were

sitting one summer afternoon in the Buckinghamshire garden of one of them. "Don't go!" urged my Aunt E. As she said it, I was aware of someone behind me among the trees. I turned sharply round and saw, unmistakably, and with my physical eyes, the wraith of Nellie. "Did you see her?" I cried. "See her!" said my Aunt H.— "There you are, seeing imaginary people. You *do* need a rest!"

And I gave in, telegraphing to Berlin that I would arrive on August 15th instead of July 15th; between which dates certain changes had come over Germany and the world.

(Bourton-on-the-Water,
September, 1914.)

(15) ? Needle merchant
has not yet appeared.

(Glasgow, 1920.)
(Ditto Geneva, 1923.)

(15) "Beware of the man
with the needle."

I: "What do you mean?"

N.: "He is coming for
you with a great needle."

(16) "Beware of yourself,
and forever worrying over
things that none can mend.
You're like that; you take
after your poor dead mother."

(17) "Beware of books,
books."

(a) "They're losing you
your eyes."

(b) "They'll only muddle
your brain."

(16) Apposite.
(Birmingham, 1913.)

(17) Warning not heeded.

(a) True.

(b) True.
(Oxford, May, 1914.)

• GENERAL PROPHECIES.

(18) "On the whole the life ahead of you is better than the life gone by."

(19) "You won't spend much more of your life here."

I: "Here in Birmingham?"

N.: "No, here in England. You'll live away in foreign lands."

(20) "I see big changes in your career, all during the next ten years, and they are all the same space apart."

(a) "First of all I see you with great moving crowds of people, all dressed in brown."

(b) "Then the colour changes to blue." (Nellie was staring into space. I could see that she saw, physically, what she was describing, was living in the 'future' of which she spoke.)

(c) "For the last change I can't see the crowds so well; everything is grey."

(18) I suppose broadly true.
(Geneva, 1923.)

(19) At the moment Nellie spoke I had never left the shores of England. Since that day ten years ago, I have lived, alike in war and 'peace,' almost entirely abroad.

(Geneva, 1923.)

(20) Precise, and as I think clinching. Bevelling here and wedging there, I can, after a fashion, fit in 'Coincidence' as an explanation of most of Nellie's other shots. Here it won't go in:

(a) In the autumn of 1915, exactly two and a half years after Nellie had spoken, I left England for the British Expeditionary Force: khaki country.

(b) Exactly two and a half years later, early in 1918, I left the B.E.F. for a French Army area: horizon-blue country.

(c) Exactly two and a half years later, in the autumn of 1920, I came to Geneva when the League of Nations Secretariat left London for its present headquarters. So far, it is true, no definite uniform

has been decided upon for members of this body, though measures in that sense have been wishtly foreshadowed. Or grey may be meant to describe the general atmosphere of Geneva, or the mist on Lemman, or the spirit of Calvin, or the superabundance of grey matter in our world-fashioning brains.

(d) "The third change will be the best one."

(21) "One of these changes, I think the third, seems to be brought about by the help of an oldish man who's a friend of yours. He has something to do with books."

(d) Well——

(Geneva.)

(21) I need hardly say that I secured my present post through merit. But man is not saved by merit alone, and the kind help of Professor ——, the distinguished Oxford Hellenist, may have counted for something at the moment of my initial appointment.

(Brussels, October, 1920.)

(22) "You will marry."

(22) Prophecy still unfulfilled.

(Geneva, 1923.)

(a) "I see a tall, dark-haired woman. No, her hair gets lighter."

(b) "Money of her own."

(c) "She is some connection—niece, is it?—of the friend who will help you."

(a) Peroxide?

(b) Good.

(c) ?

(23) "But before this you will come very near marrying someone else; not some one you want to marry, but someone who wants to marry you."

(23) [My comments are gallantly omitted.]

FORECASTS FOR THE NEAR FUTURE.

(24) "I'll try to come nearer now. . . . You will be somewhere soon with three ladies driving quickly through the country."

(25) "A present of about half-a-dozen fine books will be made to you about the time you are leaving this house."

I: "What sort of books?"

N.: "Learning books."

(26) [Omitted.]

(27) [Omitted.]

(28) "You will have a letter soon about a girl, which will make you laugh—perhaps about a marriage."

(29) "You will have an awkward moment at school (I don't think Nellie has reason to know that I have anything to do with schools or teaching in Birmingham,

(24) Yesterday I went a motor ride to Stafford with Mrs. Dobson Drew and Mrs. Tinayre. We were invited by a Lichfield friend of Mrs. Drew's, Mrs. F. Nothing remarkable in this, except that I have not been a motor drive for above a year: and but four drives ever.

(Birmingham,

April 14th, 1913.)

(25) At the time of my leaving Birmingham, my scholarship class made me a quite unexpected present of four books: Mrs. Browning's Poems, and three historical works.

(Oxford, April, 1913.)

(26) [Entirely realized.]

(27) [Not yet come true.]

(28) To-day comes a letter from Smith-Grey, telling me of the engagement, just announced, of R. H. [an Oxford acquaintance of ours, snobbish, and ridiculous] to a girl with 'pots of money'!

(Birmingham,

April 16th, 1913.)

(29) This morning left at home notes for a lecture on the French Revolution was giving to my class; and suddenly had to improvise, not with much success for the

though Mildred may possibly have told her) "through forgetting some papers or notes. I see you standing there a moment, nonplussed, angry with yourself, but in the end you will recover yourself, and it will be all right."

(30) [Omitted.]

(31) "I see you taking some sort of examination in a great hall, not I think in Birmingham; if not examination at any rate you are writing in an immense room with lots of other men—all dressed in black."

(32) "You will not be very long in this house, a few weeks only."

(33) "Not be back again Birmingham—many — many years."

(34) "I see you riding—horse—away on the chase."
(Chase of whom? Cannock Chase?)

first moment or two. Was furious also, reflecting that I belonged to a determinist universe in which my every action had been planned and plotted beforehand.

(Birmingham,

April 8th, 1913.)

(30) [An unhappy prophecy, partly fulfilled.]

(31) My Oxford Finals, which I took some fourteen months later. Immemorial rule has decreed soberest hue for examinees' garments.

(Oxford, June, 1914.)

(32) True: this, I think, is the only thing Nellie said which she might already have known.

(Oxford, April, 1913.)

(33) More wrong than right. I have been back in Brum two or three times during the past few years, tho' each time for a few hours only.

(Glasgow, 1920.)

(34) ?

Nellie's speech had become rambling and indistinct during the last utterance or two. It is also to be noted that after a frightening run of bull's-eyes she was beginning to go wrong.

There was a long silence we dared not break. At first I waited for more; then, realising she had finished, filled in

time by trying to recollect her prophecies one by one ; tiring of this, and set on edge by the interminable silence, I began counting, counting feverishly, hoping at each magic number, each dear seven'd catholicon, that Miss Calmady or Nellie—or someone—would stir or speak or somehow slay the quiet. Someone—who ? Who ? I felt near me, hovering, ready to spring, to envelop me, some Enemy. My soul sought mad flight ; found he could run in a circle only, an ever-narrowing circle ; each revolution taking him farther from my bodily self, but the Other ever harder upon his heels.

I shook myself violently, jerked forward, escaped. “ Thank you. It has been very interesting. Now, can you tell me something that is going to happen almost at once ? I am Doubting Thomas. I want to be able to prove *straight away* the truth of something you tell me——”

The sense of queerness, of going round and round, of far-awayness, returned ; terror-free this time, but more invasive. Nellie was staring. She cried, staccato : “ The power is passing to you.”

While she spoke her face was changing. As of old my own had been wont to do when as a child I had stared at it in the mirror, changing quickly to my dead mother's, and changing back. Now Nellie's face was not her own, it was my mother's, it was mine——

I stifled a cry.

My soul departed from my body, and looking back at my form in the chair, called : “ What are you staring at, Emmanuel ? ” I could see my eyes close, that I was asleep, was sinking, perhaps dying. “ Wake up ! ” I cried, “ *Emmanuel Lee !* For love, for pity, wake up. Oh Christ, deliver me ——”

Then consciousness departed.

There was Nellie on the right of me, and Miss Calmady on the left with her writing-block.

“ What is it ? ” I asked. “ Have I been asleep ? ”

“ No,” they said, “ you have been prophesying.”

I reproduce textually what Miss Calmady had taken down, though I had not then, nor have I since ever had, the faintest remembrance of having said it :

(35) "I see here in this room three young men, not quite men, more like boys. One is tall and broad, invalid-looking, with lightish fuzzy hair brushed back from his forehead. He is sitting there." I had pointed to the chair on the right of me in which Nellie was sitting. "Another is dark, with blue-black hair, and sallow-looking, there in that chair," and I had pointed left to Miss Calmady's armchair. "There's a third somewhere here, but I can't see him," and I had looked down at my lap, stroked my knees, and pointed with droll insistence at my own stomach. "He ends here," and I had sought to indicate that the crown of his head was on a level with my shoulder.

"What else do you see?" Miss Calmady and Nellie had asked as I stirred in my trance.

(36) "Look at the dark water! The child! He's going under! He's drowning! They're pulling him out again. Look at the white foam oozing from his lips . . ."

I was unpleasantly affected by what they told me, and would have preferred to play with these experiences no longer. But madness was still in the air. Nellie was staring again.

"I have something to say" she said, "before we finish. I must. Sing to me."

"Alone, do you mean? And what?"

"No, both of you. Sing Bringing in the Sheaves."

"I've never heard of it," said Miss Calmady, Churchwoman knowing not Sankey, "but I see Mr. Lee has."

With a suitable sense of the ridiculous, which vanished during the first bar, I began. I was finishing the chorus of the second verse:

"Sowing in the sunshine,
Sowing in the showers,
Fearing neither clouds
Nor winter's chilling breeze,
By and by the harvest
And the reaping ended,
We shall come rejoicing,
Bringing in the sheaves.
Bringing in the sheaves!
Bringing in the sheaves!
We shall come rejoicing,
Bringing"—

when Nellie broke in, with a new voice, a tone lower:

(37) "Look! There is something happening, something ill——"

She was in trance; her eyes, staring, saw us not.

"Happening here and now?" I cried.

"Not here, nor now. *The harvest is by and by. And there!*" She turned round in her chair and pointed leftwards, to a griffin in the window, which was of Birmingham stained glass.

"Where?"

"In a strange land. See the forests! The white house down there; no, it's climbing up, now it's set on a high hill, and white no longer, turned from white to black. There is a crowd all round you, and a dwarf. A dwarf—and a dark boy, no, young man—no, it's you, you yourself, you—no, the dark boy again, and there" (her whispering voice trembled and her body shook), "there is the giant, the Other. Zzz . . . Zw . . . Zv . . ." (a silly buzzing sound) "Zzzwv . . . Pray God to save you." She cowered back, terror-stricken, in her chair. "Ow, He's coming for me!"

Ultimate fear invaded her face. With an unseen Foe she writhed and battled in the chair, and then, with a wrench, struggled to her feet, came out of trance, and tottered against the mantelpiece.

"What was it?" she asked faintly, as we helped her back to her chair. Her face was streaming. "I'm tired out."

She was soon her normal self. The horror had never completely possessed her; she had come back from the other world *in time*.

While Nellie rested, Miss Calmady read aloud her notes.

"I don't ever make no comments," said Nellie, "on what They have said. But you'll see."

When she had gone, Miss Calmady and I settled down by the fire again. For a long while neither of us spoke.

The horror on Nellie's face, her struggle with her unseen foe, the change in my own self in the last moment before I left consciousness, had all been phenomena more vital, more physically real to me than the happenings of my ordinary life; had left behind them sheer certitude of their realness; at the same time the very fact that I had so super-naturally felt them,

seen them, made it impossible adequately to recreate them to myself. I tried, but a black cloud loomed up in my brain and drove me back, reduced me to reflection on extrinsic points : the content of the two ' prophecies ' of my own, their absurdity ; Nellie's last and unlikeliest—or likeliest, for she had *seen* what she said. Here the black cloud received me again and left only corners of my brain to buzz and whirl round trifles.

Dwarfs, for instance. I remember trying to concentrate all my mind on dwarfs. I thought of all the dwarfs I had ever seen or heard of. Rumpelstiltskin and his Grimm company. Then a pair of horrible creatures I had once seen as a child at the Knaresborough Hirings Fair. A flaunting board outside a tent : " Mr. and Mrs. Dwarf. The World's Tiniest Bride and Bridegroom. Adults 4*d.*, Children 3*d.*," had coaxed six halfpence from the pockets of myself and schoolboy friend. Inside we had seen a nightmare couple, standing not more than three feet from the ground, the woman wizened, evil, with low brutish forehead not an inch high, dressed in filthy bridal raiment ; the man even more loathsome, as fat as his ' wife ' was thin, a globular hairless mass in tight-fitting wedding suit, with bulgy eyes and soft hanging chin, like a diminutive hippopotamus in human dress. When a mockery of the marriage ceremony began, we fled, sick and terrified. . . . Then Krassinski, the only dwarf I knew much of from history books, who had persuaded Poland's nobility to crown for their king Henry of Valois : Henry the darling son of Catherine de Medici, who wore earrings and fine ladies' robes, on whose knees were dandled, turn and turn about, Anne Duke of Joyeuse, and Jean-Louis Duke of Epernon, who, every inch a queen, now like a queen faced danger, and now fled cravenly from his kingdom or very shadow, who hacked to heaven the Protestants and in his turn was stabbed to hell by Catholic monk. . . .

Giants ! I was Bevis, I was Jack : would kill them all !
Forests !——

" What moonshine it all is ! " I burst out suddenly. " What muck ! " ; startled at the sound of my own voice, for I had not spoken consciously. Someone else had said it. My own soul was away, beyond the universe. For a white noetic moment I had insight into the meaninglessness of time. My

soul stood outside time ; the past was the future, and there was no such thing as either.

When I came back to the earth, this moment's experience, turned to the purpose for which it was sent me, showed me that prophecy was not the least but the most explicable form of supernaturalism. Prophets were merely people for whom time did not exist, who, as I had just done, could sail into timelessness, and who, as I could not, could then recount to those around them, still imprisoned in time, what they had seen and heard. (As Mrs. Dobson Drew, whom we shall meet in the next chapter, would have said : Fourth dimension and all that.)

" Not moonshine ! Not muck ! " I cried.

" Ah, you know now," said Miss Calmady gently. "*Nellie knows*. It is God's will, not fortune-telling. Some people are told by Him of things that are coming, and are privileged to tell you so. Nellie is one such. A year or two ago she told me that Lizzie—you remember my old servant Lizzie—would die within the twelvemonth ; within the twelvemonth Lizzie was under the earth. A little while back she told me that I should be gone in three years ; in three years' time I shall be gone."

I went over and kissed the old woman's hands.

CHAPTER II : LICHFIELD—THE SECOND WARNING

After a dreamless night I awoke in the best of spirits for my holiday, and caught the first train to Lichfield.

There were four books in my Gladstone bag, two put there for purposes of work : August Fournier's *Napoléon I* and a volume of Sorel's *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, and two for pleasure : the two-volume "Journal" of George Fox, which I had long coveted through the windows of an Oxford bookshop and had just bought on the strength of this vacation post, and a little bright red cardboard *Bible in Spain*.

I reached Lichfield early.

It was a spring morning, wide and radiant. The roads were drenched, as there had been rainstorms all night, but in the sky now no cloud was seen. Already in that far-off time I thought myself old, old ; but to-day the spring was singing in my heart, I stepped lightly, the bag was a feather, I and the world were young !

In spring come the few glad moments of God's year. Some men, when sad, dwell chiefly on the past (Eternity seen backwards) ; when glad, they look ahead. For them the eternal past is full of sorrow, the everlasting future primed with joy. For me it is not so, and as in autumn, which is sad, my mind turns to the numberless sere autumns of the uglier centuries that are to be, so in spring, which is joyful, I see sometimes before me, revelling in the mind's eye, the earth's green childhood days : the Morning Star going forth to herald light upon the Echinean isles that stand beyond the sea, saffron-mantled dawn on the flowery Scamandrian plain, groves of Arcady, Messe the haunt of doves, dancing nymphs, and all the dancing youthtime of the world.

These visions lightened my steps ; I was care-free, full of hope. This four days' Lichfield Easter was the starting-point surely of great things.

So, as chance willed it, it was to prove.

I had hardly reached Mrs. Drew's house, we had hardly exchanged greetings in the hall, when she cried out with enthusiasm, in her well-remembered accent, that Walsall had always thought so classy (though 'twas but upper-middle-class): "Oh, my *dear* Lee, so glad to see you. It's wonderful to see you face to face, don't you know, after nearly three years, isn't it? You *must* tell me all about Oxford, and all that. But first, I must tell you: I've got *such* a treat for you. You are to come to a *séance* that's taking place to-night at a friend of mine, Mrs. Salt's."—Not twenty four hours since Nellie! The instantaneous impression was unpleasant, but swift pride in the coincidence, as though I was responsible for it, entered and held the field. Besides, Nellie was not a '*séance*.'—"Mrs. Tinayre—you remember her, *don't* you, you met her in Walsall once, *she* remembers *you*—who came from London yesterday to stay with me for Easter, she's coming too—lives in Croydon you know, or rather Purley; that's *better* than Croydon, isn't it?—and *she's* never been to one before. Mrs. Salt has staying with her one of the most famous mediums in England, *perhaps in the whole world*. He'll be *quite* wonderful. She's a *very* great friend of mine, and she said I might bring both Mrs. Tinayre and you along, on two conditions: first, that you took the thing *seriously*, don't you know, and second that you had *never* been to a *séance* before."

Underlining her words as often as Queen Victoria; and at the same places.

"I will take it seriously" I replied, "and I have never been to a *séance* before. Something to do with table-turning, isn't it?"

"Table-turning!" echoed Mrs. Dobson Drew indignantly. "All that's mere nonsense—in *comparison*, I mean"; reflecting that she, yea even she, had now and then enjoyed a tabular gambol, and that the sport therefore was not so silly *as all that*. "This is going to be something most solemn and wonderful; something mystical."

Mystical indeed: I knew what mystical meant.

I made no reply, annoyed as we always are when others dare use a word which means something far far nobler to us than it does to them.

At this moment Mrs. Tinayre came into the room; a stately

and self-possessed woman : Suburbia Superba. Mrs. Drew burst in upon our greetings.

" Alice dear, *you're* looking forward to it, *aren't* you ? *You* think it's going to be serious, *don't* you ? "

" *Rather !* " replied Mrs. Tinayre, with hint-taking enthusiasm.

" It's all so wonderful ! " added Mrs. Drew intensely. " Spiritualism, metaphysics, and all that. This mysticism——"

How dare she ? I knew what mysticism meant. How I disliked and despised for a moment that generous friend, who dared put this evening's mumbo-jumbo, whatever it was, on the same footing as the only thing in life, in my life, that counted.

The experiences that I am going to relate in a moment are, I think, quite apart from any prophetic quality, relevant to the succeeding tale ; the what and the wherefore of which tale I may briefly indicate here and now.

The only novel I ever wrote had a measure of success with the critics (and, in general, they tell me, with those engaging ' people that matter '), if not with the larger public, just sufficient to induce a certain brave and friendly house to prod me for another story. For some months I have been trying to do as I was bid, and for some weeks now ever more patently failing. Whatever breath of the creative faculty once stirred within me stirs no longer ; that I have discovered, not without bitterness, not without self-pity, remembering that six years ago, in those ambulant absurd Somewheres in France it still lodged fitfully in my lungs and gave me voice to dictate my one and only story to that kind, that tolerant, that shorthand-writing soldier-man. But now, whether it is advancing age, for I am climbing the stairway of the thirties ; or this Geneva where I live, hard foster-mother to any Muse ; or sheer fatigue, for they work us with a vengeance in this Rothermere-chastened International Secretariat of the League of Nations, ay, work us sorely, as hard almost as their employers the scribes who pluck rivals' feathers from the ' Nest of Lakeside Idlers ' that we are not ; or whether unperceived death, following hard on my inspiration's one effort : whatever the reason, I can sing and fly no longer, and can but trudge and traipse to

Publisher's Doorway, craving admittance with a knapsack of mere facts upon my shoulders. Oh, I will empty them out jauntily, and cry my wares gamely, and maybe even, as dearly indeed I hope, get gold and to spare. But shall not forget that I have failed, and that mere autobiography tricked up as a tale is a confession of weakness and poor balm for aching pride.

The passage in my own life I have chosen to recount, filling the summer of 1913, is the one I think that can, with fewest problems of presentment, be made of some interest to others ; there are adventures, genuine adventures of quite story-book calibre, and strange countries, and strange people ; there are comic moments, and there are spicy ; and there is a major spiritual experience. Yet, with but few inevitable reticences, it is a story that can be told fairly and squarely. I will omit only what seems to me irrelevant to such unity as the narrative may hold, or overwhelmingly dull in itself. Names are changed throughout, dates sometimes, and places once or twice. With actual facts I have only tampered when not to do so would have been ungenerous to the dead, harsh on the generous living, or foolhardy from the point of view of my own dear skin. In the essential element—the 'supernatural' element—I have been a faithful servant to facts, or rather to facts as I apprehended them. This distinction is worth noting, if not by those who are seeking here a tale merely, perhaps by those graver ones who might adjudge me as not without responsibilities, holding that my book is a contribution, however light and loreless, to what is called psychical literature. For them then I would repeat that all subnormal phenomena are described exactly as I felt them, i.e. as the magical realities that for me they were.

Here appears the relevance of the immediately-following incident.

My childhood's religion had been sombre, and religion's hold on me tighter and more lasting than on most of the youth of my generation ; in some measure, I suppose, I had always been 'a psychopathic case.' But never till this Lichfield Easter had any experience opened so wide my eyes to Evil or my heart to nameless fear ; never before had I been smitten so awarely with the psychopath's real malady, a household

divided against itself ; till now, this Thursday's particular Eternity, when a sword came out—from Heaven ?—and jogged my triune poor being out of joint, setting at variance my body, my mind and my soul.

Hence, those who wish to can explain away abnormal events I may recount by the abnormal state I was in, following upon this first hallucination ; the which hallucination, more hostile ones will add, gave the poor half-witted fellow a temporary kink, for—Lord !—if he could see all that, he could see anything. More foolish ones will vote the whole story an impudent lie. More foolish ones still, and I hope Carlyle was right, and the world is fools mainly, may believe, like I the writer, that to-day's was a verily miraculous experience, sent to me by God—or God's Enemy—for some purpose of His Own.

I had already once read through George Fox's " Journal," and, remembering his experience in that field near Lichfield where the tradition of centuries has placed a great Christian martyrdom, I took it into my head, on going out for a walk after luncheon, to carry with me the volume in which the passage occurs, so that I might read it aloud (as some read Dante, planting tourist campstool on Arno bridge, or others Wordsworth, toiling up Helvellyn or Pike o' Stickle with Selected Poems open in pilgrim hand) on the actual spot of the Quaker's experience.

I set out from the town, came to the meadow where local tradition has always staged the martyrdom, leaned up against a field-gate, and opened the book.

For a moment I looked back at the peaceful city, which can have changed little since Fox's day ; at the three warm sister spires clustered round by trees and old red roofs. The westering sun was bright.

I read aloud :

" I lifted up my head and saw three steeple-house spires, and they struck at my life. I asked them what place that was ? They said, Lichfield. Immediately the word of the Lord came to me, that I must go thither. . . . I stept sway, and went by my eye over hedge and ditch till I came within a mile of Lichfield ; where, in a great field, shepherds were keeping their sheep. Then was I commanded by the Lord to pull off my shoes. I stood still, for it was winter : but the word of the Lord was like a fire in me. So I put off my

shoes, and left them with the shepherds ; and the poor shepherds trembled, and were astonished. Then I walked on about a mile, and as soon as I got within the city, the word of the Lord came to me again, saying : Cry, ' Wo to the bloody city of Lichfield ! ' So I went up and down the streets, crying with a loud voice, Wo to the bloody city of Lichfield ! And no one laid hands on me. As I went thus crying through the streets, there seemed to me to be a channel of blood running down the streets, and the market-place appeared like a pool of blood. When I had declared what was upon me, and felt myself clear, I went out of the town in peace ; and returning to the shepherds gave them some money, and took my shoes of them again. But the fire of the Lord was so on my feet, and all over me, that I did not matter to put on my shoes again, and was at a stand whether I should or no, till I felt freedom from the Lord so to do : then, after I had washed my feet, I put on my shoes again. After this a deep consideration came upon me, for what reason I should be sent to cry against that city, and call it the bloody city ! . . . Afterwards I came to understand that in the Emperor Diocletian's time a thousand Christians were martyr'd in Lichfield. So I was to go, without my shoes, through the channel of their blood, and into the pool of their blood in the market-place, that I might raise up the memorial of the blood of those martyrs, which had been shed above a thousand years before, and lay cold in their streets. So the sense of this blood was upon me, and I obeyed the word of the Lord—*obeyed the word of the Lord—obeyed—*"

There was silence around ; no one was near to mock or disturb. As I read in my book, behold, suddenly my voice was not my own voice but another's ; my lips were forming the words, but he that spake was far away in utmost heaven, and nearer than my own soul. Then, as I closed the book, for a flooding moment the veil of flesh was torn from my soul, over which there poured an all-powerful sense of Sin ; I tasted and saw my own wickedness for the sickening horror that it was, and felt and beheld how I was part of all Sin ; stuff of the essential evil of the universe. I was filled with loathing and terror. I could have spat in my own face.

Then, at the instant of foulest despair, a Voice cried, offering hope, this time entirely another's : " Cleanse your heart. Pull off your shoes and socks. Kneel down and pray to God, Who only can save you from the evil you have seen and that will yet encompass you more fearfully ; soon, beginning here, *to-day.*"

There was no question of not obeying. Swiftly I took off my shoes and socks—thank God there was no one about—and knelt down on the grass ; which here was muddy, as a footpath led to the gate against which I had been leaning. Young

Worldly-Wiseman Lee strove to say "Fool. Ass. Are you stark mad?" But the Other Voice was stronger, and the physical presence of Evil too lately felt.

I prayed fervently, fervidly, asking God to deliver me from Evil and to dwell within me.

He came. I had an inward and absolute sense of Him and of His glory, a sense All-Eternity too real for word or even thought to convey. There was no feeling that He had come to save me, no thought or apprehension of self or salvation at all, only the perfect apprehension of God and a shadowless joy and peace. Opening my eyes at His command I saw, away across the meadows, the three red spires as tongues of roseate light, that flamed ever higher, aspiring unto heaven, where in the utmost sky they tapered together, and as the point of a crimson sword tore asunder the firmament, which departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and for a half-second of time my bodily eyes too beheld the dazzling splendour of the holy city, New Jerusalem, and in the midst thereof the King in His glory. (Though always the inward apprehension was mightier than the visual.) I fell flat on my face, worshipping, elated beyond all understanding; for I had seen God.

I rose, and walking on air returned to the town.

Only when I drew near the gate of Mrs. Drew's elegant mansion did a sense of the ridiculous begin to make headway against the spiritual elation; and not till I entered the house, at sight of the spick-and-span cheeriness of the hall and the brisk twentieth-century Sheraton all round and the bright Halifax-Brussels on the floor, did the Lord Jesus ebb and vanish and depart entirely away.

I sneaked upstairs, washed my feet and changed my socks, brushed the muddy knees of my trousers, and went down to the drawing-room for tea.

Mrs. Drew and Mrs. Tinayre were already accoutred for the walk to Mrs. Salt's.

"You're to have practically *nothing* to eat," said Mrs. Drew, whose mighty Midland teas I remembered from Walsall days. "We're due at Mrs. Salt's in half-an-hour, and she said we were only to have the *lightest* of meals beforehand. Spiritual preparation, and all that. Food interferes with it all, you know."

Lightest of meals it was : one exiguous scone, one lilliput cup of tea.

We set out.

Mrs. Salt's house was a substantial eighteenth-century mansion in red brick, beyond the town on the far side of the cathedral. We were shown into a large dining-room, and Mrs. Drew introduced Mrs. Tinayre and myself to Mrs. Salt, a grey-haired matronly woman of about sixty ; solid, friendly, un-mystical-looking to a degree—the sort of person one would like to have for one's aunt, or someone else's aunt. We were the first arrivals, but soon the room began to fill up, till there were about a dozen of us : a normal middle-class company, women predominating. Towards one end of the room stood a large mahogany dining-table, without a cloth. Round this table, but a yard away from it and backing the walls, were ranged a dozen Windsor chairs.

"Do sit down !"—Mrs. Salt waved us towards the latter—"as I think we're all here now." (Which, I wondered, was one of the most famous mediums in England, *perhaps in the whole world?*) "Now you won't mind my making a sort of little speech, will you ? You are all good friends of mine, or friends of my friends, which is enough for me. None of you have ever been to a séance before, I understand, except Mrs. Vallandingham"—she turned to a stout, distinguished-looking woman in deep mourning, whom I had known in my Walsall days ; the only person present, outside our own party, that I knew. "The conditions are excellent, I think"—glancing at a thermometer on the wall—"yes, 67, that'll do, though a trifle on the high side perhaps. The light is about right too ; it will quite soon be dusk. Excellent ! Now as far as possible I want ladies and gentlemen to sit alternately. No, not yet !" she commanded, as at this hint we began an inter-sexual scramble, "I shall be leaving the room in one minute to fetch in Mr. Quince, and shall then leave you alone with him. But I'd rather not know the positions in which you are sitting ; oh, no ! I know you sceptics." She shook a coy fat forefinger at our naughtiness. "Some of you'd be saying that while I was out of the room fetching Mr. Quince, I'd told him where each of you was sitting and all about you. The idea is of course ridiculous ; to me "

(solemnly) "blasphemous. But then I know you non-spiritualists so well ! For the same reason you must excuse my not introducing you individually to Mr. Quince ; I don't want him to know your names. As I've told most of you already, he is staying with me for a rest, but he insisted, as a courtesy—which I deeply appreciate—on giving a private séance for my personal friends. I think that's all. Is there anything anyone wants to ask ? "

" Yes," said a light-haired middle-aged man, a Canadian from his accent, " what do we *do* ? I mean—er—what is the—er—mechanism of the séance ? "

" There is no mechanism " replied Mrs. Salt, laughing. " You will just do whatever Mr. Quince asks you to. I shall leave you now. Arrange yourselves afresh round the table. Mr. Quince will sit here." She indicated a rocking-chair, rather isolated from the bulk of the company, between the end of the table and the fireplace.

Almost at once she returned, bringing in tow a little creature, whose age, and I had almost said sex, it was hard to divine. Snow-white hair crowning a sleek babyish face, wreathed in beaming smiles : there was something wrong about him, though he was too cheery to be definitely unpleasant. He wore a coat and trousers, and was presumably a man. It was not so much that his appearance was genderless as that he belonged to a puckish order of beings to whom the sex-classification did not seem to apply.

Mrs. Salt disappeared.

Mr. Quince took the rocking-chair, and at once began to address us in a shrill eunuchy voice. He spoke in squeaky little bursts as though he were reciting lines of rhymeless poetry, raising his voice at the end of each line in a slightly foreign way. Catch a Frenchman, an emasculate Frenchman (that is if you can), and make him declaim, half solemnly, half gigglingly, a poem of Walt Whitman's ; then you will have a fair idea of the Quincean manner of speech :

" Mrs. Salt is one of my best and oldest friends.

She tells me that all of you are her friends.

I hope we shall have an interesting evening.

And a helpful evening too."

(Twice : sententiously.)

(2nd Verse)

“Lately my clairaudience has not been so good as my clairvoyance.

So, although I may be able to see some of your friends,
And even describe them quite clearly to you,

I mayn't be good on names.”

(Twice : deprecatingly.)

We stared, sitting rather stiffly on our wooden chairs. Mr. Quince was rocking himself to and fro.

“Who plays the piano ? ” he asked suddenly.

We looked at each other.

“Hymns ” he added.

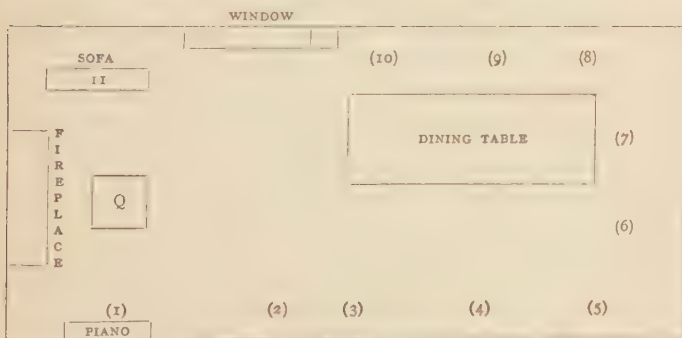
“That depends,” said the wife of the Canadian gentleman, who appeared less unwilling than the rest of us to officiate, “what sort of hymns ? ”

“Nearer my God to Thee is usually helpful.”

“I think I can play that.” She moved to the piano.

“You must all sing, you know,” giggled Mr. Quince.

This is how we were sitting :



(Q) Mr. Quince. (1) Canadian gentleman's wife. (2) Mrs. Dobson Drew. (3) Myself. (4) Mrs. Tinayre. (5) A clergyman. (6) A fair-haired woman of about thirty. (7) The Canadian. (8) A young girl of about twenty. (9) A middle-aged professional-looking man. (10) Mrs. Vallandingham. (11) A handsome woman in young middle-age, with a big black hat.

The Canadian lady played a bar or two of Sullivan's tune,

the one sung oftenest—Gilbertianly—in the playhouse-hating Nonconformist chapels.

“No, no, no, not that tune,” broke in Mr. Quince querulously, and hummed the first bar or two of Dykes’ ‘Horbury,’ perhaps the best known setting to this hymn, Titanic music that only the last waves engulfed. After one or two false starts, the Canadian lady reproduced it.

Now such is the decline of organised religion that in the very homeland of Protestant hymnology, in this English land, only three of us—the Canadian, his wife, and I—seemed to know properly the words of the famous hymn. We three sang it through, Mr. Quince rocking his chair to the rhythm, the others joining in over-emphatically whenever they could, as in the easy Nearer-to-Thee bits. We began the last verse ; I was wondering what would happen when it was finished :

“ Or if on joyful wing
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon and stars forgot,
Upward I fly——”

As near as I remember it was on the word *fly* that Mr. Quince rose abruptly from his chair and began to shamle about in the space in front of the table. He conveyed an odd impression of having changed, or rather acquired, sex ; his whole gait was feminine ; he was larger-bodied, broader-hipped ; and, with not artificial gesture, kept adjusting an imaginary shawl on his shoulders. To me at any rate, trousered Mr. Quince seemed now to be a woman ; an oldish woman. The effect was uncomfortable rather than lewd ; comic hardly at all.

After moving indecisively for two or three minutes first in one direction, then in another, she (the medium) made straight for Mrs. Vallandingham, stationed herself in front of her, and addressed her. The sudden first sound of the spirit voice thrilled us more than we would have owned.

It was a woman’s voice, and it was broad Scots—Ayrshire I was told afterwards, and for all I know it was Ayrshire.

I understand something of several foreign tongues, but of Scots nothing ; the approximate rendering I give here has been approved by a Midlothian friend of mine in Geneva, as sufficiently resembling the much be-Laudered music hall

patois that passes in the South country as Scottish dialect for an Englishman to recognise it as such, while being just intelligible to a Scotsman.

"There's a sperrit near ye," were the first words. "A man. Ye ken him weel. An auld man. Very ill. He suffered sair, but he's no sufferin' noo. It's no lang since he passed ower. Less than a year." (Mrs. Drew had written to me a few months earlier that Mr. Vallandingham, whom I had known in my Walsall days, had died after a painful illness.)

"What is his name?" asked Mrs. Vallandingham, speaking in a grave but to me surprisingly natural voice, as though she were talking to an ordinary human being who had just returned from another country to bring her news of a relation who was lying ill there.

"I canna hear." A pause. She traced huge letters in the air, forefinger for wand. "But I begin to see . . . begin to see . . . these letters: A—W—V." (Arthur Windle Vallandingham). "He's happy noo, and weel."

"I'm glad," serenely. "Has he anything to tell me?"

"Ay. He wants ye to thank his freend."

"What friend?"

"The freend—the freend that's a' bees."

"I don't understand."

"One bee, two bees."

"I don't understand."

"Maybe he keeps bees. Listen: Bee! Bee!"

"Ah! Mr. Beebee! Of course. Yes, he was Arthur's best friend and since his death has helped me in a hundred ways."

"Weel, ye thank him, the auld man says" . . .

So this was what happened. The medium came and spoke to us individually, bringing a message, or pretended message, from someone dead whom we had known. What a pity I knew no one dead. What a pity my friends were all alive. The medium would pass me over.

He (she) crossed the room to the piano, and stopped in front of the Canadian lady. The latter leaned forward helpfully, wheedlingly, yearningly, chin in air. But the medium

rewarded her not, said nothing, waddled along to where sat Mrs. Dobson Drew, who, aristocratically, uncolonially, sought to hide her equal eagerness for a 'message.' The medium said nothing; moved on a step or two, and halted next in front of me. My line was benevolent neutrality, a friendly far-away look, as though I did, perhaps, want the medium to speak to me—and as though, perhaps, I didn't. If I adopted the pose consciously, it probably expressed my real attitude. Subtle fellow! But the medium passed me by.

In front of Mrs. Tinayre she at once began sniffing. "Ye smell o' cabs an' trains." More loud sniffs. "Ye've just come frae a big village, a big town, bigger than Kilmarnock, bigger than Glasga'—if there's any such town."

"Yes, London," interrupted Mrs. Tinayre. "I came from there yesterday." There was an amused smile on her handsome face, would-be cynical; in reality she was uncomfortably impressed.

"And ye've a very great freend there—a leddy. She doesna wear ower mony claes, especially in the evenin'. Yer man doesna' like her. Ye're aye goin' to the theatre wi' her, and yer man doesna like it."

Worldly Mrs. Tinayre's smile wore thinner. What even nearer-the-bone revelations might not be coming?

There, however, Dame Quince left matters. But instead of moving on to Mrs. Tinayre's neighbour—the clergyman—she waddled back to me.

At her first words I stiffened.

"Ye're a wee bit o' the worryin' kind, laddie, and ower sensitive: ye take after yer puir mither. It was no' her blame, puir dear, for she had but a sair and sad time o' it the last few months o' her life before ye were born. . . . And ye're too fond o' books. Books! Ye're fair surrounded wi' them, and aye readin'. An' what's the gude o' them? To the makin' o' books there's nae end. And they're a' lees. The book ye're readin' noo is a pack o' lees——"

"Which book?" I broke in, loudly for boldness' sake. I stared straight through the medium's unseeing face, which seemed a sort of living telephone-apparatus, an eyed and nosed and mouthed telephone-apparatus, *through* which I was speaking.

“ The book ye brought in yer bag frae the big town ye’ve come frae. It’s a’ lees.”

I named just now the four books I had brought over with me from Birmingham. Now if ever among the hundred thousand tomes that entomb the memory of the Corsican there was a fair and just one, for all its stressing of the Austrian point of view a true one, it was August Fournier’s ; if ever a master-mind portrayed the state of political Europe before the Revolution, that master-mind, perhaps now and then too French a master-mind for some, was Albert Sorel’s ; if ever a man—pathologically, psychopathically (if you relish that kind of word)—told aloud the plain story of the soul God gave him, equalling Paul of Tarsus, Francis of Assisi, Bunyan of Bedford, that man was Quaker Fox ; if ever a downright typical Englishman wrote a typical downright book, that Englishman was George Borrow, soldier of the Gospel, friend of prize-fighters, sturdy vagabonds, gipsies. Which did she mean ?

“ What colour is it ? ” I asked, as defiantly as I dared.

“ I canna see clearly.” She peered. “ Ay, it’s a wee red book. An’ it’s a’ lees.”

“ I’m sure it’s not ! ” I said indignantly. Though now I know that the old Scotch body was right, nor should ever insult the author of splendid Lavengro and fairy-tale Bible in Spain by refusing to hail him with ‘ Prince of Liars, my London caloro ! Most valorous, most calorous, of liars in the long roll of England’s literary dead ! ’ “ What’s it about ? ” I asked, “ a foreign country ? ”

“ It’s about dark folk ; and sperrits. Oh my dear, keep awa’ frae the sperrits.” A stir of silence greeted the sudden solemnity in her voice. “ Ye’re one o’ us. Ye’re a sperrit that’s half ower, further ower than most. Keep awa’ frae us. I’m speaking as a freend, but there’s ithers in oor world no sae kind as me. Oh, keep awa’, keep awa’ ! ”

And she passed on, and left me staring.

I must shorten what befell with the others. The clergyman she passed by on the other side, taking care, with prudish gesture, that her imaginary skirt should not so much as graze the trouser-leg of the Lord’s servant. In a long talk with the fair-haired woman, she described the death of the latter’s

sister : an overturned boat on a lake, the detailed agony of drowning : till the woman was sobbing before us all, to behold (what no human eye had witnessed, as the other had been out on the dark waters alone) those re-created last moments on Wastwater, summers before. The Canadian was ignored. To the young girl next him the medium described in great detail her friends, relatives, character, tastes, her doings past and future. The child was scared.

With the middle-aged professional-looking man there were cheerier exchanges.

"Somebody that ye ken is ill and lyin' in bed. A woman."

"Yes."

"A near relation. A sister, or wife maybe?"

"My wife."

"She's *very* ill?"

"I fear so."

"Is she as ill as she thinks?" The cracked old voice was dour and tart.

Hubby smiled wanly. "I—don't know."

"Weel, I do. It's mostly shammin'; wants to make herself interestin'. Tell her to get up and tak' less pheesic and no' lie for ever in bed. Ye're no' a man. Get her oot o' bed! Get her oot!"

How we were enjoying it; how the wretch cowered before the gossip he already saw loud and luminous in our eyes: our half-averted lambent eyes.

"An' ye're to blame! Always doin' work for the Lord and nae work for yer wife. Nae man can serve twa masters! Ye're never at hame, but aye roond the Kirk—no' the real Kirk, but the English Kirk—the big spire—spire—up on hill, hill, hill . . ." (St. Matthew's, Walsall, where our friend was Churchwarden).

The medium's last words were incoherent. His face was streaming with sweat. He moved on, seeming to seek his chair, swaying to and fro like a drunken man: an unlovely sight. Mrs. Vallandingham sprang up and helped him to the rocking-chair.

He rocked himself to and fro for a few moments. We sat and stared at him in fascinated silence. Suddenly he opened his eyes, took out his handkerchief and wiped the perspiration

from his face, and, speaking again in his ordinary shrill falsetto voice, said, beaming at us all with circular grin : “ Well, was I interesting ? Who was I ? ”

“ You had a Scotch accent,” said Mrs. Vallandingham.

“ Ah, Jenny Macbeth ; she often comes. A drink of water, please.” The Canadian lady, who was nearest, poured out water from a carafe on the mantelpiece.

Mr. Quince sipped.

After rocking himself to and fro for another few minutes he appeared rested. With introductory giggles he began singing again :

“ I think I could go off a second time.

That is, if it would interest you.

That is, if you have not had enough.

If you have not had enough.”

“ Wouldn’t it tire you ? ” we chorussed, dissuading him insincerely.

“ Oh, no, no. For one thing, the second trance is always much shorter. I will try. Please play Shall we gather at the River ? ” He turned to the Canadian lady.

“ I don’t think I can play that,” she said, a trifle disdainfully. “ It’s a Sankey and Moody or a Salvation Army, isn’t it ? ”

“ It’s very beautiful,” said Mr. Quince. “ Can no one play it ? ”

I too thought it beautiful.

“ I can strum it after a fashion,” I said, as no one else budged, “ but does anyone else know the words ? ”

“ I do,” said Mrs. Vallandingham.

“ Well, try please,” said Mr. Quince.

I moved to the music-stool, while the Canadian lady, disturbing sex-order, moved to my place between Mrs. Drew and Mrs. Tinayre.

This time Quince went into trance almost immediately. I had barely begun the second verse, which I was singing practically alone—

“ *On the margin of the River
Washing up its silver spray-ee* ”—

when Quince got out of his chair, moving now with a slouching gait, unmistakably male, unmistakably vulgar, shambled towards Mrs. Drew, and, speaking in a loud and aggressive voice and with a West Riding accent, midway between Vale of York and Heavy Woollen Country, but less pronounced than either—the flattened dialect they speak near Harrogate and other such genteeler towns—gave a racy description of many of Mrs. Drew's acquaintances (of whom I knew one or two), and of her own qualities and failings (of both of which I knew something). Then he did the round of the table, missing a few of us, giving to some messages from the dead and the absent, to others a plain-spoken account of their foibles and their friends. He displayed his best form with the lady in the far corner in the big black hat, to whom, when old Scotch dame, he had not spoken. He peered into her face and began sniffing.

“ Ah reckon there's a bad smell near ye.”

The distinguished-looking lady was foolish enough to be annoyed : “ I am quite clean, thank you.”

“ Oh, are yer ? ” poking his nose right down into her face, as though her breath were what he was alluding to. “ And it's not only you, but yer 'ole 'ouse as stinks.”

“ Thank you, it does not. I keep my house clean, cleaner than the house you come from.”

“ All Ah know is as it stinks.”

(I learned afterwards, what some present, from their bright eyes and mouths contented, must have known at the time, that the distinguished-looking lady's husband was manager of a big sewage farm in Scotland, and that their dwelling-house was situate hard by the fragrant scene of his labours.)

“ Go away, you brute ! ” she cried.

“ Brute, eh ? Ah won't go away. It's you as is always goin' away, goin' away from yer stinkin' 'ouse. With a man, too. And not yer own man, an' all.”

She blushed scarlet. The audience quivered with delight.

“ If you don't stop talking nonsense I shall hit you.” She was apoplectic with rage and confusion.

The medium, too, was angry. “ Injoy yerself, don't yer ? ” he shouted. “ Give 'im what's meant for yer 'usband ! ”

The distinguished-looking lady got up, gathered her cloak

around her, and fled from the room. I have never seen her since. No one has.

We smiled deliciously at another's discomfiture. This smile became a trifle uneasy, however, as our Yorkshire irrepressible slouched back towards the rest of us, and even propitiatory as we realised that smirking politeness might help to save *us* from an outburst of home-truths, shield *us* from loud broadvowelled exposure of *our* lies, deceits, peculations, meannesses, snobberies, cruelties, spites, mucky tricks, secret tawnings on the swells. Ah, what might he not bellow forth before those loathsome others?

For, like any other company of human beings, we offered a rich field of eloquence for a candid Spirit. Wherever even two or three are gathered together, most of the vileness of the human race is represented beneath their bland exteriors; proportions may vary a little from age to age, from country to country, from class to class. But only a little. Ah, what might not the brute blurt out?

Quince trudged slowly round the table in the opposite direction from his first tour, stopping however at no one until he came to me. I steeled my nerves, and blushed amply, so that when the real blushing time came I should have got it over. My funk-movements, however, I could not so pre-date.

His anger of a moment ago had disappeared, also most of his vulgarity. He was anxious, friendly.

As a result of the day's earlier contact with extreme evil and extreme good, I was spiritually over-wideawake, ready for extreme fear, extreme sacrifice, extreme delight. But the evening's performance so far had brought no matter for my mood; might have been summed up as not much more than 'rather fun.' From this moment things changed with a vengeance.

"There's someone wants to speak to you," said the medium earnestly. "It's important: she's 'ere now."

"Who is she? What does she look like?"

"She's dark, with beads and earrings, a gipsy woman, Ah reckon. Have yer a gipsy friend as 'as passed over?"

"No. I have hardly ever spoken to a gipsy in my life."

Hardly ever. There passed before my processional eyes a dark-eyed beldame who had of old held whispered colloquy

at the backdoor with Cook, and a lady of Egypt once seen at a country fair, and the laughing dark face of a great revivalist one August the First ten years ago (now twenty), in a moment when, on the Knaresborough-Harrogate line over which I travelled to and from school each day, after the passage of the ticket-collector to whom I had cried 'Season!' I was explaining with glee to the gipsy and to a not less famous but far more virtuous Dissenting divine who completed our godly trio that season-ticket holder indeed I was, though yesterday, last day of spent July, my contract had expired, so out of threepence and one halfpenny I had done the dear North-Eastern; laughing face of the gipsy, though the divine's hardened and his lips tightened, tightened tighter as his prig's "It is theft; if you have no conscience, little boy, then I will pay for you" won only chuckles from the gipsy and from me, and tightlier still as he read in our eyes what we thought of him when, arrived in port, Harrogate platform, he did produce self-conscious coppers and pay them to wide-mouthed guard; dear face of the gipsy next night at the great Revival, singing 'Throw out the Life-line' and, with those eyes—though they changed for a moment, were another's, eyes I had seen before birth, in some other life, nearer the depths of God; but whose?—those eyes that had yesterday laughed, pulling me to himself, to Enquiry Room, to Christ.

I saw too the one other story that, apart from these infant memories, had ever joined the Romany people with me or mine.

Twenty years earlier my mother, who at that time lived near Liverpool, and whose life was then a very unhappy one, went to stay for a few days with friends who had taken a country cottage in Cheshire for the summer; this was in the autumn of 1891, some four months before I was born. One afternoon she went a long walk alone. As she was walking in a lonely country lane, she heard a sound of groaning in a ditch by the roadside, and turned to find a gipsy woman lying under the hedge, clearly in great pain.

"My child's coming," she said, "and I'm far away from the place. He will die in the cold here."

"Where is your camping-place?" asked my mother.

"Twelve miles away," and she named a distant common.

"I must leave you a little," said my mother, "there's a village a mile back, and I'm going to fetch a conveyance."

Though she was herself in ill-health, my mother ran to the next village, hired a trap, drove to where the gipsy lay, with the driver's aid lifted her into the vehicle, laid her on the floor, covered her with rugs, and, driving quickly but not too quickly, in two hours reached the gipsy encampment.

All the gipsies, including the husband, were away. My mother helped her into the caravan, and laid her on her bed.

"Stay with me," said the gipsy. An hour later, without doctor or midwife, whom the mothers of Egypt have always forgone, a child was born, a boy.

My mother washed the infant and gave it the care the newly-born need. Soon the grateful husband and all the tribe returned. As my mother stood by her bedside saying Good-bye, the gipsy woman passionately kissed her hands. "You have saved my life," she said faintly, "and the child's." And looking at my mother—"You have not long to go yourself. It's because of him you have been so good to me. Your baby unborn has saved mine. Blessings on his head. The Romany will always befriend him."

Then—so my mother told my grandmother—a strange look came into her eyes; she was far away and prophesying.

"Yes, your baby has saved mine. One day, when we are both under the earth, my baby will save yours."

A few days later, my mother left that part of the world and returned to Liverpool, which she left a few weeks later again for the last time, going home to the far West Country, to a part of Devonshire where gipsies are rarely seen, and where, in the January of the following year, I was born. On the afternoon of my birth-day, when I was a few hours old, and everyone—my grandmother, my aunt and the nurse—was around my dying mother's bedside, the old servant burst into the room, carrying a beautiful wicker cradle, a magnificent specimen of old-fashioned gipsy work. "Did you order this, Mum?" she asked my grandmother, "Don't know who brought it. I found it jist inside the scullery door, but no one knocked, and I 'aven't been outside the back kitchen all afternune, except maybe for two minutes jist now." No gipsies had been seen anywhere in the neighbourhood. My mother died a few days

later, but though my grandmother made many enquiries, who had brought the beautiful cradle, and how, was never discovered.

This was the story that rode through my mind, as I said to the white-haired eunuch—Yorkshire labourer—in front of me :
 “ What does the gipsy woman say ? ”

His manner had changed. He was no longer truculent, no longer amusing. Fear stole into his voice, and into my heart.

“ Don’t go there, don’t go there ! ” he whispered earnestly, his arm outstretched and rigid, parallel to the window, his finger pointing, drawn by some invisible magnet.

“ What else ? ” I cried.

“ The demons are there, and the Father of the demons. When the Tempter comes from that place, and says ‘ Come,’ don’t listen. Say ‘ No, *no*, NO ! ’ ”

I hardly heeded his words, for there at his side stood a young man, or rather the fetch or wraith of a young man, as I could see through him ; a handsome youth, in outlandish garb. His wraith moved towards me, touched me, enveloped me, fitted me like a garment. My body became his, and my soul. Emmanuel Lee disappeared. I was the ghostly youth.

To give a plain account of what happened within me, unbiassed by any pre- or post-conceived notions or theories, is well-nigh impossible. As clearly as I can phrase it, though the words ‘ brain ’ and ‘ soul ’ are at best approximate, what seemed to take place was this : my brain, and its function memory, remained my own, but the soul within me was now for a space this other’s, felt physically as a separate other-side-of-the-body entity within, and felt as a soul in sorest need, whom ‘ I ’ alone, by the supreme sacrifice, could save. This sacrifice—the one sacrifice there is : to be prepared to lose your own soul to save another’s, to offer *to shoulder or to forgo Eternity* according as your fear or hope of it tallies with another’s fear or hope, knowing that the wished consummation is possible for one of you two only, and that your immolation wins it for the other—presented itself, with no trice for reflection, to my instant choice.

And I chose it—I, or the Redeemer in me.

Prepared to lose my soul in fighting for this other’s, I felt

sudden power to resist the Fiend Almighty. I was not fighting for myself.

"Father of the demons," whispered the medium, shrinking back from an invisible terror. "Ow! Ow!"—his voice rose to a howl—"He's coming for me now!" An unseen foe seized him; he writhed, struggled, his face contorted by nameless fear; there was a last convulsive piteous wriggle, and Evil held him; his face was wickedness and vileness; he was possessed of the Devil.

Instantly—he had been standing perhaps a yard away—he rushed at me (memory alone connects me with Emmanuel) and clutched me savagely at the neck. Now it was my turn to fight, fight desperately for the outlandish boy, imperilled soul, within; I got up from the absurd piano stool to fight better. The spiritual fear was overwhelming; I knew the choice I had taken, and realised that if I saved the soul that had taken refuge within me, and he escaped, my own soul would return to central Me; the readier for Satan, balked and hungrier, to storm. Yet I did not, could not, waver; not even when, as in the field, the sense of the loathsomeness of the Universe, the pervasiveness of evil, sickened my nostrils. Now it was beginning to possess, invade me; it was getting inside. Soul and body I fought.

All this can only have lasted a few seconds. Shadow-folk had rushed from their seats, were wrenching the Devil away. His hold loosened. I had won. Triumphant I felt the wraith-boy depart from my body; saw him fade, with an instant's luminous thanksgiving in his eyes, into space. I fainted away.

I opened my eyes. There was Mr. Quince, back in his rocking-chair, opening his; wiping the streaming sweat from his meek and foolish face. "Ah, that was tiring! Who was I?"

"You had a Yorkshire accent," said Mrs. Vallandingham bravely.

"Ah, yes: George."

I looked at the others, that roomful of ordinary people. They were still there. I stared. They were all staring at me, piteously feigning not to. So I had not been dreaming.

I was trembling still. "May I go home?" I whispered to Mrs. Drew, who was standing near me, solicitously. "I can't walk though. A cab."

Memory holds blurred Good-byes, shadowy handshakes, a wan 'Thanks so much' for Mrs. Salt. Back at Mrs. Drew's, after a bite of supper I went straight to bed.

But not to sleep. I travelled eternal miles. I ran, for ever, through the valley of the shadow of terror, dragging my limbs along a dark road that stretched, unendingly, through a forest of grey leafless trees, grey forest of terror. The trees were monstrous, curled, obscene; in them, behind each one of them, lurked evil. I ran for dear life.

Then, abruptly, I left the sensorial state; the road and the forest faded; the eyes of the spirit closed; the mere brain-machine began working.

The Devil: was He real? Yes, for that day I had tasted Him, as at other moments I had tasted God. Christianity of course had whittled Him away. But I had never felt quite sure—are you quite sure, you, whoever you are?—for instinct told me He was there. Logic too. The Principle of Evil was the necessary corollary of the Principle of Good, Ormuzd and Ahriman (weren't those the names?—something to do with Persia—Zoroaster and all that), Satan and Christ. The Fall, and the consequent need of Christ, had no meaning without the Devil, so with the Devil had disappeared also Christ. "Satan, mais c'est le Christianisme tout entier": who had said that? Voltaire? "No Satan, no Saviour": who had said that? Voltaire; or was it myself? One of us, anyway. But now the Christians thought it not nice to speak of the Devil, and men feared Him no longer; had merely ceased to believe in Him. This was the artfullest of all His wiles. For whereas those who feared Him, those who worshipped Him even, might turn at the last to God, these who scoffed at the very idea of His existence were His surest victims. Protestantism had abandoned the Devil, the people had abandoned the Churches, the Churches had abandoned Christ. . . . (I knew nothing then of the Catholic Church and the Queen of Heaven's special power over demons from the beginning.)

The brain ceased for a moment turning out words and argu-

ment. Visions returned again. God and the Devil were waging huge war in my bedroom. Apollyon, half-giant, half-dragon, belching fire and smoke from belly and mouth, cudgelled the faint Almighty—.

‘Reason’ resumed. The Devil indeed! What rubbish. The nineteenth century had abolished that kind of thing. Chimeras, superstitions. Modernity was wiser. Progress (more slums, more misery than of old); steam (starvation); ever-widening bright road to Democracy (the great gulf fixed between Dives and the poor ever widening also); Dawn of Human Brotherhood (Hate between the peoples everywhere); what then had these enlightened latter days of ours to do with such ghoulish fairy-tales? (I kept the bracket-truths at bay.) And this was before Modern Civilisation had reached its blood-red apotheosis, before the soils of Europe had been watered with the blood of ten million dead young men, in those earlier days when the Kingdom of hunger and misery was still relatively small, when, looking eastward across Europe, there were still fair cities to be seen, before the fields of France were strewn with corpses and the German lands with skeletons, when Russia was still a living if knouted body, that smelt maybe of sweat and suffering and the earth, but not a dead one that stank. Devil indeed! Fiddle-de-dee!

Yet who had come near me at the field-gate? Who had enslaved the wretched medium, and breathed nameless terror into my face and heart?

Arguments and logic-chopping for the reality of God or of Devil are as vain as proofs and reasons against. In to-day’s moments of insight I had *seen and tasted* them both: I knew that no rationalist logic, however convincing to my brain, could weaken that reality, no Christian logic strengthen it. I knew. All men of extreme religious temper know the Unseen from such moments of supernatural insight. The uncommon nature of my day’s experience consisted in this: that, taking no count of yesternight and its adumbrations, in the space of six hours I had had three separate such moments, had so apprehended Evil, then instantly Good, then (for there is a way to Hell even from the gates of Heaven) Evil again. And a result was this: that the first second’s reflection upon these things, a second I place here in the night’s wanderings, fixed,

where years of vague peering had fixed nothing, my theology and view of the Universe for ever. God and the Devil co-existed. The Universe was Two not One. My old troubles as believer in a monist cosmos, in a God Who was All-in-All—such as : If so, why does He let evil exist ? If He is God absolutely, He could not let it exist. But exist it does—in a trice disappeared. The Universe was Two not One, and Eternity the war between Them.

(I know that the dualist conception leads, by a 'logical' high road, to the Trinity ; but must talk no more theology.)

Good riddance ? Hardly. For instead of a little brain worrying itself about the Universe, I had now a little soul fearing with new wilder terror for itself : " They are Two : to one of them my soul must for ever belong. To-day I have been warned that the Evil One has marked it for His, and is coming to earth to fight for it."

But did He then come to this earth to ravish the sons of men ? There was Faust of course. Mere legend. And Madeleine of the Cross, who had foretold Pavia and the Imperial Sack of Rome, whose prophetic powers were given her by Satan as the result of a signed and sealed pact. ' Incontrovertibly established ' ?—probably a legend too. Anyway, I had no pact with Him.

Or had I ? Were there no furtive foul promises made to a self within ?

But the other souls present that evening had been no better ; I had read a dozen crimes and vices—a dozen devilish pacts—around that smug mahogany table.

Table !—perhaps that was it. God had forbidden all commerce with tables. Insane memory coursed through Holy Writ, scanning on page after page, in clamant letterpress, God's interdicts. Habakkuk, ii. 19, left-hand middle of the right-hand page : Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake. 1 Corinthians, x. 21, bottom of a column : Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils. Hosea, Exodus. . . .

Yet I had been but one of many partakers. Why had I then been singled out for Satan's favour ? *Because I was the wickedest of them all.* I knew it. And pride in sin swelled within me. More than all that monstrous regiment of women,

I was the Devil's Own. Then as the merely intellectual perception of this possibility gave place to spiritual realisation, horror flooded me again. I was more than the Devil's, I was becoming the Devil Himself.

With a cry I sprang out of bed. "Cleanse me, oh God!", and imitating the afternoon's gesture to recapture its reward, I switched on the light, put on my coat and trousers over my pyjamas, knelt down, pretended green bedroom carpet was martyred grass, and then—for all my need, my urgent uttermost need for God—stooped to a moment's would-be artfulness. Thinking that to pray openly and cravenly for protection from the Devil might savour too much of cadging, and might therefore alienate Heaven, I decided to flatter the Almighty: I would ask for 'guidance.' But as I failed in deceiving myself, in hoodwinking God I failed piteously. Yet He forgave me, and radiant came into my heart. Fear took flight; I was at peace.

I got back into bed, and though the worst was now over my mind continued, if more peacefully and more sleepily, to worry with the secondary problems of the evening's events. What the medium had said of the past and the present to me, and, it appeared, to others, had been unforgettably true. And what he had said of the future; would not that also, as the Field's warning of evil TODAY, tally with truth? With what assurance, magnetic, noetic, he had turned and pointed to some place where the future would take me! His arm had been nearly parallel with the window, the window looked out onto the front garden, the garden marched with the road, the road ran (let me see) in the same sense as the Cathedral: from west to east therefore. But he had pointed slightly to the right, slightly south of east therefore: east-south-east. My drowsy mind trekked across the map, noting the paint-box counties: first the northern corner of green Warwickshire, then Leicestershire in his gay jacket of hunting red, Northamptonshire dressed in dowdier russet as becomes a cobbler's lad, Cambridgeshire—would the line touch green Cambridgeshire or not?—county-boundaries are muddling round there. The line of his arm, if continued still further east, would reach the sea near Great Yarmouth, or say a bit further south, near Lowestoft. But it was across the sea,

someone had told me. Who was it? Never mind: the point is, let us take the line onwards. Onwards however I could not make it go. The rounded East Anglian coast was the utmost limit of vision. Flog my imagination as I would, it refused to picture either sea or land beyond; emptiness only. At Lowestoft it stuck. Lowestoft, Lowestoft, I kept repeating. Lowestoft: most easterly town in England. Eastern counties: most Anglo-Saxon part of England. Last embers of struggle against William the Conqueror. Hereward the Wake. Wake—No: sleep! Eternal sleep. Swinburne. Proserpine. Poppies. Poppy Land. Cromer. In Norfolk. Fourth largest county. No big towns. Most Anglo-Saxon part of England. Last embers of struggle. . . .

Next morning I felt better. At breakfast I essayed to be chatty. Mrs. Drew restrained me.

‘I’m *profoundly* sorry, Lee. I’m *entirely* responsible, I *hope* you’ll forgive me for taking you there.’ Her underlining grave, not garrulous. Queen Victoria in mourning.

So if she, who had experienced nothing, but only seen, appraised matters thus, I could find no hope, no future for a theory to which the morning’s cold bath had given birth: namely, that I had exaggerated the whole affair, that it was my febrile imagination, overwrought nerves, etc.

“Not that I don’t *believe* in it,” pursued Mrs. Drew. “On the contrary. So take what that wretch said as a warning, and if ever by any chance you are thinking of visiting the eastern counties—for it was east, or nearly due east, that he pointed, about thirty degrees south of east, we reckoned, Mrs. Tinayre and I—simply don’t go. It made me *shudder*, you know. Last night after you’d gone to bed, Mrs. Tinayre and I drew a line on the map.”

She got up from the breakfast-table to fetch the atlas. A pencil line ran from Lichfield, passing just south of Leicester and Peterborough, through the Fen country and south Norfolk, finding the North Sea near Lowestoft.

“Do you know anyone in those parts?” asked Mrs. Tinayre.

“No,” I replied. “Oddly enough the east midlands and the eastern counties are almost the only part of England I’ve never been to and where I know nobody.”

“Well, anyway,” said Mrs. Dobson Drew, laughing over

heartily, suddenly alarmed at seeing she believed what she was saying—superstition and all that—“ if anyone invites you to stay anywhere near that line, just say thank you and refuse ! ”

I held my tongue, I don't really know why, as to Nellie and her talk of a foreign land. If there was a lack of frankness, and there was, in not even mentioning the Nellie evening to Mrs. Drew, I promised myself I would make up for it by the fulness of the account of to-night's business I would give to Miss Calmady on my return to Birmingham. Mrs. Drew would only chatter ; Miss Calmady would help.

But going half way, or quarter way, to frankness, I exclaimed “ I say ! Suppose it's farther east still, across the North Sea : on the Continent ? ”

“ Oh, I don't think *that* ! ” said Mrs. Dobson Drew.

CHAPTER III: FAINT BEGINNINGS OF FULFILMENT

As soon as I got back to Birmingham I told my old cousin the whole story.

She listened in silence.

"Of course you believe it all?" I concluded, not quite knowing what I wanted her to say, but ready to swerve a little with her reply.

"Entirely, Emmanuel. So do you. Details here and there may be wrong; some almost certainly are. At each moment of existence the forward prongs to good or evil, to life or death, fork narrowly, and spirits, like human beings, see a little to the right or a little to the left of Fate's pathway. But that grave danger to your eternal life awaits you, that your soul is one Satan has singled out for one of his fiercest attacks, is certain." (Twentieth century. Elegant Edgbaston villa. Cheery drawing-room. Sensible old lady. Real words.) "I can do nothing, my dear, nor can you yourself. Only God can protect you. Is your heart surely His, for Him as surely to defend it?"

"You don't mean I'm to try deliberately to get nearer to God because I now know I need His protection more than ever before? That would only get me nearer the Devil."

"No. But were you God's already? Before this happened, were you in your innermost heart for Him and against the Other, loving good and striving towards it; hating yourself?"

"Ah, that always."

"Then He will save you. I know it. I know it. When that soul cried to you through the medium for help, with no time for reflection, you gave it. If you had paused to think what you were doing, would you have done the same?"

"Maybe."

"And if the soul in torment had been one you hated, one

that was compassing your own eternal destruction, would you still have done the same ? ”

“ I—don’t think so.”

“ God would.”

“ I’m not God.”

“ You are.”

After a long while, Miss Calmady resumed. “ As no talking on the central fact can help us, let us look at some of the details. You say the medium pointed east-south-east. Let’s carry that line on to the Continent and see where it goes. But you remember Nellie pointed too. First let’s check Quince’s direction with hers.”

We took a piece of cord and stretched it from the middle of the chair where Nellie had been sitting to the griffin in the window. A compass gave E.S.E., twenty degrees south of East. Exactly as Quince had pointed. I don’t know if I was pleased or frightened more ; yet know I should have felt cheated if the directions had not tallied.

I fetched my atlas, my own this time, which I had not had with me at Lichfield, an atlas I had possessed since the age of eight. The moment and manner of its acquisition came back to me vividly now.

In my class at school most of us had had provided for us by our parents a cheap little atlas, full of ugly unpoetical maps, though no doubt ‘ quite good enough for schoolboy use ’ ; some of the richer boys, however, mainly I think those who loved atlases least, owned a rarer treasure, filled with gay physical maps, all dwindling depths and soaring heights to shew brinish sea and verdant land ; charts of the world shewing race, temperature, religion (black pagan Africa, scarlet more pagan Spain) ; blue isothermic glories ; historical maps for the rhomboid shiftings of deciduous empires that had waxed and waned ; in short a delight for the eye, mind and heart.

It was the last day of term. The supervising master, who was busy correcting examination papers, told us vaguely to tidy our desks and check our books. A boy near me, by name Burge, one who possessed the glory, one of the rich, a big red-faced brute who was leaving, whispered to me : “ I shall

chuck most of this muck away ; it's mine, my pater's paid for it," and the Vandal wrenched the blue cardboard cover from the lovely book, and flung the maimed middle into the waste-paper basket, near the desk of the master, who did not heed. But I was heeding, and my cheeks burned. And I knew that another was heeding, little Patmore, the other side of Burge : he, the twin swot, the rival prodigy, my companion eight-year-old in this class of twelve-year-old louts, with whom I did unchanging battle for first place in weekly marks, he who loved me as he loathed the others, but loved that atlas more. " Coverless, violate : that atlas shall be mine," two savage little hearts were saying. We waited, counting the mad moments till the play-hour, living through the glory, the gustation ; the shame, the sneers of poverty, the heart-fears that Burge might yet re-claim his own ; ready like tigers to spring. I was ready. He was ready. But, when the bell rang, and the master departed, I was one half-second the quicker. I sprang from my desk, rushed for the basket, and grabbed the treasure, soon to be kissed and brown-paper-covered, and inscribed ' *Multum in Parvo Mappery* ' ; winner by a handsbreadth.

" It's not fair ! " shrieked Patmore, fragile and trembling, as our elders giggled. " Burge threw it away, so it's anybody's, and I've been here a term longer."

" Muck ! " adjudged Burge. " Swot Lee came first, Sneak Patmore second. Swot Lee wins."

" Take it then," sobbed Patmore, " take it, you thief, take it ! "

As I traced my eastward line, the gentle face of Sneak Patmore stared sometimes from the page.

" Over the sea " : Nellie had been unequivocal, so we took the map, not of England, but of Europe, and then the map of Asia. As neither of them was on Mercator's projection, it was not altogether easy to trace the line, which ran approximately thus : across the North Sea to Holland, passing between The Hague and Amsterdam ; across Germany just south of Leipzig and north of Dresden, on through Görlitz and Breslau, into Russia ; through Poland well south of Warsaw, hard by Kieff in the Ukraine, athwart the Volga delta, fringing the northern shores of the salt Caspian ; on into Asia ; through the Sea of Aral, across the endless steppes, through the Sea of Balkash,

across the great desert of Gobi or Shamo ; last across Mongolia, skirting the Great Wall, and across China, through the heart of the secret city of Pekin ; ending its long Eurasian journey in the far waters of the Yellow Sea.

“ After all,” I argued, “ the chief thing that makes me think there is nothing in it ”—it made me think nothing of the sort—“ is that all these horrors are going to happen abroad. Well, I’ve never been abroad, and am not likely to. When ? How ? I haven’t got the money to go gadding about Europe, worse luck. The whole thing’s ridiculous, isn’t it ? ”

It was not ridiculous, and I knew that it was not.

I thought so less than ever during the next few weeks when, one by one, pleasant and unpleasant, many of the most detailed of Nellie’s minor prognostications came true : as I have set them out in Chapter I.

My own two prophecies also. On this wise :—

(36) I had become friendly with the four boys in my history scholarship class, and especially with one of them, named Yardley. On Tuesday, April 1st, All Fools’ Day, he asked me to spend the day at his people’s. His father was a mine-owner, who lived some miles out of Birmingham, across the Staffordshire border. As I had no classes that afternoon, I was able to accept Yardley’s invitation to go out for lunch. After lunch we went down a coal-mine, coming up for tea after two black stooping hours underground. About half-way through tea, I was overcome by a sudden trembling, and sensation of extreme agony. Someone near death seemed to be calling for help. For a fraction of a second I saw a child’s head rising above dark waters, and sinking again. I was near trance, but I recovered, and said nothing. Five minutes later an excited housemaid came rushing into the dining-room,

“ A terrible day it’s been, this ’ere Fools’ Day, Mr. Yardley, beggin’ yer pardon for burstin’ in ; there’s been one thing and another all day. Now there’s two miners’ kids come round cryin’ and screamin’ at the back door, pretendin’ as ’ow another of ’em’s fallen into the pond, and’s drownin’. It’s the second time they’ve been ; first time I slammed the door in their faces. As if we ’adn’t ’ad the story of someone drownin’ in that there pond on and off this past twelvemonth, and as if

it weren't always stuff and nonsense. But now there they are, bawlin' away at the back door, so real-like that I'm 'alf frightened, and thought I ought to come and tell you, sir."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Yardley, impatiently.

"It's true," I broke in. They all stared. "A child is drowning."

Mr. Yardley looked at me as though he thought his son's tutor a trifle queer. But the note of insane authority had its effect, and we all rose from the tea-table and trooped through into the scullery. There, at the back door, stood two howling urchins: "Fred, what plays with us, is drownin' in the pond there, Mister."

We accompanied the brats across the stretch of half-blackened grass that led to the Grey Pool. Around us, with man's handiwork—shafts and stacks and slag-heaps—in every direction, and with only a few blackened hedges and grey fields for Nature's, the earth was hideous. The two urchins led us to the edge of the pond, to the spot where, they weepingly maintained, a little playmate had fallen in (in quarrel had been pushed in?). Yardley and I clambered down the steep bank of the pond; found ourselves in black slime up to our knees.

"There!" cried the urchins, and indeed where they pointed there seemed to be bubbles on the surface of the pool. We had brought a kind of improvised fishing rod—a strong hook riveted to the end of a pole—and with this we poked about in the water, though we had to move about gingerly for fear of sinking further into the slime. Suddenly there was a tug, and, pulling with all our might, the seat of his little trousers caught on the hook, we pulled out a ragged child, hanging limply and horribly; blue, dead. There was the white foam oozing from his lips . . .

(35) I had intended, before leaving Birmingham, to ask my four boys out to lunch or supper in a restaurant. One day I mentioned this idea to Miss Calmady.

"Why not ask them up here?" she said, "to-morrow for instance, as I am out for the whole day. I will tell Mildred to arrange for whatever sort of meal you want. Why not a sort of high-tea about six o'clock?"

I thanked her; then, floodingly aware that Jacobs, tall,

broad and fuzzy-haired, and Nott, raven-black, sallow, with Yardley, a head shorter than myself—Yeoman I could not place—would, after tea to-morrow, be sitting in Miss Calmady's drawing-room, I cried : “ You suggested it, you know ! You suggested that these boys should come to the house. Three of them fit absolutely what I said. It's not me who is trying to fulfil my own prophecies.”

“ It had to happen, anyhow,” she said. “ But aren't there four of them, not three ? ”

“ Yes, four.”

“ Then either one of them won't come, or he will be away from the others when they sit down in their chairs.”

“ Their predestined chairs.”

That afternoon I invited the four of them.

Next morning Yeoman did not turn up at school ; his mother sent round to say that he was ill.

The other three accepted. After tea in the dining-room, we moved into the drawing-room. I was excited, but strove not to shew it. The three boys should sit down of their own free choice : free choice ! I, at any rate, would neither fight Destiny nor kow-tow to it. They hung about, hobbledehoy-like, vaguely waiting for me to tell them where to sit, while I fumbled lengthily at the other end of the room with a box of cigarettes. Then the spirit of revolt seized me ; I would no longer be a neutral, but would strive that the prophecy should *not* be fulfilled, would battle against this determinist universe, work against what, in the lowest layer of my consciousness, I wanted, and knew must happen : somewhat as when, in a railway train, approaching a city where a sweetheart is waiting to greet me at the station, and Heaven tells me that if I count up to a certain number (777 or other magic) and reach it at the identical moment in which the train draws up at the platform, so will my Brighton or Brussels or Barcelona week-end be blessed to me, then I count too quickly or too slowly, making the synchronousness as unlikely as I can, tripping or trailing my numbers to fight against my own hopes, so that if fulfilment comes, and the last 7 of 777 chimes with the train's ultimate jolt, so will fulfilment, as I had striven against it, be more flawless, and the sweetheart kinder : so in the instant I espied the three boys grouped near the mantelpiece in the position

that made it *least* likely that if told to sit down they would take their chairs predestined, I called out : " Oh do for Heaven's sake sit down, all of you. Anywhere."

Look ! They shuffled round, stumbled over each other, clockwork marionettes like all of us ; and tall broad delicate fuzzy-haired Jacobs sat down in his arm-chair on the right, blue-black sallow Nott in his arm-chair on the left, while Yardley, shorter than me by a head, took the Sheraton chair facing the fire ; sat down all three of them in the seats numbered and reserved for them by Fate from before the beginning of Chaos.

As to Nellie's chief prophecy, No. 37, which was also Quince's, together with the thirteenth (my luckiest and the world's unluckiest numbers), to what extent and under what conditions these were fulfilled is the subject of the following story.

CHAPTER IV : OXFORD

I returned to Oxford on April 17th.

This was the last summer save one of the old Oxford, and an Oxford summer was then in the whole world the most fragrant gift the hands of heaven held out to young men anywhere. The sun that year was generous, and the city radiant. Working and idling ; walking, talking ; bathing, punting, I passed the first few weeks of term, wherein but one event had bearing, and that remote, on the story I have to tell. I will record it, first because it introduces you to Czelten, who was to introduce me to another ; second because it will amuse me (and Czelten) to behold it in the printed word.

Count Ivan de Czelten was a Slav. His father was a Czech, his mother a Russian ; both were fathomlessly rich, in the manner of pre-war Slavs. The father was a distinguished amateur Orientalist, who had travelled much, and had crossed on foot my desert of Gobi or Shamo. He was wont to go away for years at a time, leaving little Ivan with his mother in a palace he owned in Vienna. This lady was a true Russian, as Westerners who have read, or heard of, Gogol or Dostoieffsky conceive true Russians to be ; not always wrongly. To give pleasure to her paramour of the moment, she would have her little son dragged at midnight from his attic bed of straw, stripped, and with Holy Russian knout flogged by moujik servant, while she and her gentleman friend—Russian or Austrian or German as the case might be, for nationalist prejudice was never a fault of hers, race-rancorousness alien altogether to her liberal and westernised mind—rolled about on a divan together and roared with laughter at the sport. Or she would starve him, until his body was a famine child's, when she would take kodak-snapshots of his shame, to be pinned to the walls of her hospitable bedroom, seen and enjoyed from the pillows of her hospitable bed ; or, on bitter nights, would give orders to the servants that he was to be turned into the street, ill-clad and without food.

On one such night in midwinter, when Ivan was about ten years old, his father, after an absence of many months, returned suddenly to Vienna. Alighting at the door of his mansion, he found cowering in the portico a famished waif, naked but for a ragged cotton suit. He put his hand in his pocket, and gave the child a crown.

“Thank you, Father,” said Ivan.

That night Holy Russian knout was used on the good wife and mother, who fled shrieking from the house to bosom of liker mate. Ivan was sent away to school, first at Lausanne and afterwards at Eton. From Eton he went on to Oxford, where he was a year junior to me. We first met through a common friend, Basil Nutt of Christ Church, and were soon intimate. I did not know his whole story at once, though in the quite early days of our friendship I remember his telling me how during the previous vacation he had, for the first time since Vienna days, seen his dear mother. It was at Venice; she was strolling across the Piazza di San Marco, escorted by a flashy young Italian; “I thought it best,” he told me, “to cut her.”

Czelten had whims. He was an adept of Armour’s, a lover of Crosse and Blackwell both, had penetrated the innermost arcana of all foods that men tin and bottle and pot and pickle and pack and can, his cupboards being stacked with ‘White Heath’ peaches, ‘Rising Sun’ pineapple-chunks and ‘Pay-sandu’ tongues; boxes of sardines, prawns, anchovies, tunny, herrings in tomato sauce; laver, piccalilli, Worcestershire sauce, Chow Chow, with other dainties sealed and signed by Elizabeth Lazenby, and not a few of the fifty-seven varieties of Heinz her trousered rival; chicken-ham-and-tongue paste, Gentleman’s Relish; chutneys galore; dates, prunes, figs; ‘Mafuta’ bananas, ribald and lank. At his table I first tasted Bombay duck, and there learning, who should have known already, that such was fish not fowl, was the readier to work the undoing of a common enemy whose mouth was at all times too full of ‘my Vacation hunting in the Caucasus.’ We bagged him swiftly; to Czelten’s straight shot, “Get any Bombay ducks?” came swiftly down, murmuring, “Nesting season, you know.” Or had he the laugh on us? I think not; for, mighty hunter too in the Parnassian pastures of modern

French poetry, was brought down no less swiftly by my "What do you think of Stephen Guicheq?" faltering, while flushing: "I only know his *shorter* things—you mean the famous Guichet, of course, ending with a T?" "No," I said, "with a mute Q." He is a clergyman now.

Then Czelten was a leading member of the Oxford Alpine Club, the which, on moonlit nights, performed exploits on the roofs of the more dangerous colleges. He had climbed the black needle of Exeter Chapel, the local Matterhorn, and opened up much new ground on New College, Queen's and Trinity. It was he who, one remembered Sabbath, placed a certain article of bedroom ware on the chapel vane of a most godly college, where, suspended by its handle, lewd, triumphant, it shamed and reddened the prim company who were emerging from the worship of the Lord, and whence, despite the efforts of a worldlier firing party, whose marksmanship was marred by their mirth, despite the yearning gaze of a vast multitude, including not a few women, yea, and members of the women's colleges, that thronged the quadrangle, and despite the coaxings of a hired band discoursing music, sweet Chamber music, in the street without, it was only dislodged when, next morning, the gallantry of the Sabbatarian fire brigade became available. Czelten loved too the real Alps, the high Alps, and of old knew them. To-day when he is fathomlessly poor, in the manner of post-war Slavs, and could no more afford a holiday in Dolomites or Oberland than the bulk of Englishmen who make the wealth of England, if taken a square inch of turf from the Monk or Jungfrau, he will, like pre- and post-war Slavs, kiss it and sob shamelessly for the glory of his days that were.

Ivan was small and elfin. He was generous, often secretive, whimsical, in friendship unstable never. He had no morals and was one of God's good men. I do not mean that he was immoral so much as that he was indifferent to, or—for once the tag holds truth—superior to, morals. He lied brazenly. When we reproached him with this, he would confound us by citing famous incidents in history and literature where a lie could be seen of all men to have been the noblest course of action. There was the French atheist traveller, bitterest enemy of the Church, who, caught by savages in the

company of two French Catholic priests, and watching the latter tied to the stake and the wood kindling, cried, when the witch-doctor put to him also the question : " I, too, believe in Christ," and died for the faith he had not. There was Giles Winterborne in Hardy's *Woodlanders*; Don Blanco and Mutability Smith (who, who were these ?), and Dmitri Something-offsky in some recondite Russian novel. We saw that truth was the least and meanest of the virtues. Then Ivan was a thief. Out to breakfast or lunch at an acquaintance's, he would frequently, flagrantly, slip anything attractive on wall or mantelpiece into his pocket : a knick-knack, or photograph, or enviable pipe. We would reason with him. " Rot ! " he would say Marxianly, " it is not stealing property that is theft, it is property itself that is theft," droll rejoinder from the future lord of many moujiks ; or so we then thought him, knowing not Lenin. On the other hand, as he did unto others so would he be done by : I never knew a friendlier man to steal from. In yet another field the views he championed were, if catholic, unorthodox. When taken to task, he would reply that a majority, yes, an actual majority, of the world's great men, greatest men, though never indifferent to affection, had been indifferent as to the direction of their affections. (God made geese, but God made ganders too. What's sauce for the goose . . .) There was Socrates, and Plato, Æschylus and all the utmost Greeks ; Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, Bill Shakers—you had only to read the sonnets ; Demetrius the Dumb (what mute inglorious pervert might this be ?) and, in our own day, if a little lower than the angels, Walt Whitman and Verlaine and Father Someone-ovanoff—the *enfant terrible* (" as you, dear Manuel, will remember,") of the *Slushky* or Holy Sophie movement in the middle 'nineties

Oh, Ivan the Terrible !

But the most famous thing about Czelten, and the centre of his own loves, was his collection of gods and idols. His room—mantelpiece, tables, walls—was crowded with fallen deities from Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Pacific Isles : a really valuable collection. My own favourite was a wooden monstrosity, some three feet high, gauntly enthroned in the middle of the mantelpiece, whose face wore a thin leer, at once kindly and hypocritical, midway between a friendly Red

Indian hag's and a Puritan schoolmaster's : half squaw, half Squeers. I christened her President Wilson ; that politician, though less celebrated than he afterwards became, having recently been elected to the American Presidency, and filling, through his strange resemblance to Czelten's idol, a frequent place in my mind. It was indeed in connection with his idol worship, his whoring after strange gods, that Czelten, before I knew him well, first came to my rooms : since I, even poor I, possessed my wooden idol, a prim if underclad female deity named Gagool, who once in the deep African forest had drunk the incense of a whole nation until, discrowned and dethroned by Plymouth Brethren missionaries, near relatives of mine, she broke her ultimate fall on my mantelpiece, whence to-day as I write she smirks approval at my page, and whence, that Oxford morning, she smiled at Ivan, tempting him. I was poor ; he was rich. He offered me the almost incredible sum of fifteen pounds for my lady. She had brought me frequent luck ; I loved her ; I refused.

Later, when I knew Czelten better, I asked : " Why didn't you steal her ? "

" I never steal things from people I like. It wouldn't be moral."

The incident I set out to relate at the beginning of the chapter was this.

My rooms that term were in John Street, on the top floor. The bedroom, which was at the back of the house, looked out, or rather sheer down, on to an un-egressed inner courtyard. The window was practically without sill, and was (humanly) inaccessible from below. At night I always locked my bedroom door ; the room was small, and there were no corners, couches, cupboards or curtains, round which, under which, in which or behind which fell shapes could lurk. One night, a pitch-dark moonless night, I awoke, apprehending with frozen terror that some monster's horrible form was heavy upon me. Was I awake or was I dead ? My voice and limbs were numb ; I found, when at last I dared try to move the latter, that my legs and arms were pinioned. I found I could just move my fingers, and surely it was this-world sheets they touched ? The form was alive, was softly breathing a few inches from my

face : some foul gorilla. After a moment in which I vainly flogged my brain to calm and my nerves to tautness, I made a desperate effort to free my arms. The creature pressed harder, its dead weight lay heavier on my chest, and the soft breathing gave place to growls and snarls. Ah, what monster, what terror was it ? Fear scampered round in my brain like a rat in a trap. My mouth alone was free ; I set to and shrieked. At once a paw closed upon my mouth—and Czelten was whispering : “ For God’s sake, shut up. It’s only me, it’s only a joke——”

He sprang from the bed and lighted the gas. When he understood how serious a fright he had given me he was sorry : all he had sought, he explained, was a piquant little change in the ordinary night’s work of an ordinary Alpine term.

“ Getting through the window quietly was hardest,” he said dreamily, “ I managed the drain-pipe all right, though with no window-sills to help it was stiff in places. Unhealthy brute, only opening your window an inch at the top. You know, I’m damned sorry ”—for I was still trembling. “ I owe you a first-class good turn,” he continued. “ You’ll see. Sorry, Manuel. Good-night.”

He slipped through the window, and I watched him as far as I could see, wriggling in the black night down the forty feet of drain-pipe.

The lovely Oxford May sped on. Seen from amid the green trees and sane gaieties of Eights Week, Quince and Nellie were phantasms, dim creatures in the life of some one else : except when Memory, whom I kept at bay, would for a moment rout Will and breathe life into their bodies and bring them staring near ; and chill fell on my spirit, and Meadows-green turned Immortality-grey. Yet life was too full and too feckless to leave much place for Satan ; Who was however but biding His day, to appear at the high-tide of the feast.

From jottings in grubby journal, I reconstruct a few of these last irrelevant days :

Sunday.—Breakfast with Basil Nutt at the House. A glorious summer day. We walked up to Shotover. Lay in the grass among the gorse bushes, staring at the sky, talking. Greats, philosophy, Hegel, Freud (that year he attacked

Oxford, as last year Paris), the sub-conscious self, free will, determinism : topics for summer sky. On the way back to Oxford for lunch, we met Professor S., on horseback, riding back to the fine new house he had just built him on Shotover Hill. He asked us to lunch, and afterwards told us of the joys and trials of housebuilding. The chief difficulty had been the lack of water supply. After he had bought the land, but before building operations had begun, he had consulted an Oxford engineer, who gave it as his expert opinion that to hunt for water on the top of Shotover Hill was mere folly, and that was that. If Dr. S. was determined to live where he had planned, he would have to fetch every pailful of water his household needed from a pump two hundred yards down the hill. That was that. Then, somewhat against his philosopher's better judgment, Dr. S. consulted a dowser.

" 'This dowser,' he told us, " was an unlettered hind. Of the geological conformation of the land he knew of course nothing ; moreover, he was strange to the neighbourhood. Anyhow, one fine morning he came, hazel twig and all. To my surprise he set straight off *up* the hill, away from all probabilities of water. I followed. Within five minutes—he was wandering to and fro like a man in a dream—I saw him suddenly tremble, and the twig turned sharply, pointing, as a wand, downwards at the ground. ' There 'tis, Mister,' he said. Next day I employed a well-sinker, though the spot was unpromising, to say the least of it. No luck. When he had burrowed down no less than twenty-five feet, first through dry sand, then hard clay and finally through rock, I decided to stop. My engineer told me, plainly but politely, that I should be a fool to go on. But the well-sinker pleaded ' Five feet more.' Next morning he rushed down to the cottage, where we were then living, radiant with excitement. He had struck one of the finest springs of water you could wish to see, just twenty-seven feet down. My engineer was crestfallen. ' Damned luck,' he sneered."

" Was it ? " I interposed.

" No. Whatever it was, it wasn't luck. I have since gone into the whole question, and there is no doubt that the number of cases in which the dowsters succeed is forty or fifty times greater than anything one could attribute to accident. For the old

German dowsers themselves, as for most of the modern ones, their hazel-twigg is a fairy-wand, a witch's broomstick, and their dowsing pure magic. Modern scientists who have investigated the matter, finding that they are 'up against it,' and moving back, as are scientists in so many fields, to a less wholly materialistic interpretation of such phenomena, admit that the dowsers have 'super-normal perceptive faculties,' are susceptible to the faintest impression made by the object searched for—gold or coal or water as the case may be. A kind of motor-automatism."

"Isn't magic as good a word?" asked Basil Nutt.

"Yes, and I think as good an explanation," laughed Dr. S. "Thus are we twentieth-century dons further from the nineteenth century than from the twelfth."

Basil and I tried our hands at dowsing, twig in hand woo'd rhabdomantic riot, traipsed to and fro for leagues in field and copse. In vain: we were no dowsers.

Walked back to Oxford. Nutt and Czelten to tea. An hour's work (Feudal law) before dinner. After dinner, went to see Tyndale at Corpus: talking. Wagner. Nietzsche. Thus spake Zarathustra. Bernard Shaw. Man and Superman. Superman. The Kaiser. The German Army. German philosophy. Here I worked in dowsers, and so by easy stages to motor-automatism, the subconscious self—and Freud. Dreams. Trances. *Actes Manqués*. Purity. Women. Wives. Wives.

Monday.—Smith-Grey to breakfast, with his mother, up again for Eights Week. Lectures and work all the morning. Afternoon: went down to the river with Gower, and ran with the Exeter boat. Bumped again! In the evening, was 'Visitor' at New College XX Club debate, on the Drama. Thought I was funny; so, apparently, did the audience. "Real motive in going to see the girl on the film is to see the film on the girl": that kind of thing. (Dear old Oxford.) After the debate, went round to Knollys' rooms in New College. Here a large crowd was assembled, clustered admiringly round the Head of the River (New College) cox. Talking. The river. The races. Close thing that day with Magdalen. Offensiveness of Magdalen. Offensiveness of Balliol. Offensiveness of Balliol. Offensiveness of Balliol.

Wednesday.—Breakfast at New College with Wemyss and Dean, who had just met the Prince of Wales. No other topic therefore possible ; we discussed him with the forced over-indifference which, Oxford opinion had decided, was the meetest mask for the snobbery of us all. Freud didn't even get a look in. Worked till lunch. Lunched with Ewens at B.N.C. Talked Union politics.

The Oxford Union Society is (the next page or two for the instruction of the uninitiated and my own amusement) a large club, frequented partly by old gentlemen, some of whom are among the world's chief eccentrics, known wherever the Union Jack floats and men of the upper-middle-class foregather together ; mainly by undergraduates, who secure various advantages : good club rooms, a garden, a library, an excellent choice of newspapers, writing-paper, and, Sir, free postage : I speak of olden times. For a certain proportion of these undergraduate members, perhaps a third, the chief fact and feature of the Union was its famous weekly debate ; for a third of this third again the holding of the historic offices of the club—President, Secretary and the like—was the be-all and end-all of Oxford life, and the terminal struggle therefor life's chief employment. To this monomaniac ninth Ewens and I for a time belonged. The voting in the weekly debates was mainly on party lines : you voted Radical or Tory. But the ninth was divided on quite other lines, by a cleavage more fundamental far : a difference not of mere aim but of method ; not the light divergence that divided Guelf from Ghibelline, Nihilist from Tsarist, but such bridgeless river of hate as flows between two rival plunder-gangs in say Portugal or a corrupt American township. The aim of both of the office-seeking gangs was : office. But in the methods they employed to attain it the Smarmers and the Swipers were sharply contrasted. The Smarmers were gentlemanly ; the Clean-Government party, so long as it was government by themselves. A system of select clubs, of gentle slander, of snobbery (cruellest vice of gentle Oxford), of sheer ostracism, did much to quench the hopes and ruin the Union ' careers ' of humble aspirants whom the Smarmer Bosses would not admit to the fat pastures. Every new young speaker was scrutinised, discussed, weighed, his value to the gang appraised ; if he was considered in-

fluent, or likely to be useful, he was graciously admitted to the charmed circle ; if not worth capturing, he was condemned to the outer darkness. A campaign of gentlemanly calumny was initiated against any wretch who fought his fate, continued to speak insolently—that is, well—in the debates, and who declared his intention of seeking a seat of the mighty. His honesty, his sincerity, his morals, above all his social origin, were questioned : “ Not quite our class, you know,” worked wonders with the servile herd who formed a fair proportion of the electorate. Everything the cad did was ‘ not done ’ ; and if, as in the political battles of more Southern, more savage lands, no red blood flowed, at least the stainless victors quelled the flow of all young blood they deemed not blue.

All this was years ago.

In the life of a club as of a nation, tyranny raises in the end its fellow. Somewhere about 19— all the disinherited and disgruntled began to band themselves together, and the great company of Swipers, or Union Tammany, came into being. Opposed to a bland and pitiless plutocracy, they were a corrupt and unscrupulous democracy. Open vote-catching, naked vote-bartering was their line. ‘ Supporters ’ were collected in a dozen obscure corners of the University and marched to the polls, almost literally, in gangs. The Swipers devoted special attention to pariah classes : the Indian students (niggers or blacks), earnest Christians (pi’-men, or the God-lot), Egyptians (Gippers) ; going even, as the Salvation Army in the ‘nineties, to the slums of the submerged, yea even among the non-Collegiate students : in search of souls, and votes.

The new party won instant success, the very first time it openly attacked the old gang sweeping the polls, though with a most incongruous ticket. As against the sleeker peerage-huckstering whip or ‘ agent ’ of the English type, the Smarmer Boss, it developed Tammany Bosses of the American municipal type, of whom the chief was Heine, dear Heine, corrupt and charming. He had lists of supporters classified by colleges, by groups (pi’, papists, Eton, niggers, etc.), by reliability, by corruptibility, by likelihood to vote the whole or only part of the Swiper ticket.

To this light but, as knowledge and memory serve me,

veridical account, I should add this. There were a few honest, a few conceited, a few foolish and a very few brilliant men who, for one reason or another, stood completely outside either group ; and a few, exceeding bold, who belonged to both. This, at first, had been my own policy, when, greenhorn that I was, I first beheld the real nature of politics, and realised that good speaking—I was a good, occasionally very good, though never remarkable speaker—was, except in the case of one or two men whose brilliance overawed the gangs, but a secondary element in success. And I wanted success. So did Ewens, good friend of mine, who was at this time at my side more than half way across the alluring bridge that leads from innocence to ambition. At lunch this day I am writing of we discussed our plans. Ewens wanted us to throw in our lot quite openly with the Swipers. Though of the two gangs I preferred them—happening to prefer, as among vices, intrigue and corruption to hypocrisy and cruelty—I still hoped to make the best of both worlds. “ Can’t be done,” said Ewens, and pointed out that the Swipers would pay a big price for open adhesion, would probably run us both for high office this selfsame term. Ewens was editor of one of the two undergraduate journals, while I, by private swiping of my own, had secured the important privilege of writing the Union “ Weekly Reports ” for both, distributing therein adroitly unimpartial praise and blame. We were worth a great deal, we decided ; we must be run as stars on the Swiper ticket, or not at all. I remember the last convulsive wriggle of my conscience, and the sequel . . .

Last day of Eights. Poor old Exeter. Worked before dinner. Afterwards walk with Smith-Grey. Wondrous moonlight night. Talking. Friendship. We were wonderful friends now. Should we always be friends ? Friendship was the greatest thing in the world. What else was one sure of ? What other happiness was there in any of the worlds ?

Thursday.—Dysart and Tyndale (friends) and Harrod and Hocking (possible Union supporters) to breakfast ; pleasure and business combined. Until lunch worked, and wrote speech on India for the Russell and Palmerston Club. Lunched with Gower. Bathed with Valentine Seer (my chief friend) at Parson’s Pleasure ; the hottest May day I ever remember.

Tea at Buol's. Lounged about the High with Tyndale. Ibbetson and Strang came round to talk. Philosophy. Berkeley. Kant. Cant. The First Cause. Oxford is the Home of First Causes. Plato. Greats begin to-morrow. Greats men versus the others. Ancient philosophy versus modern. Ancient poetry versus modern. Pindar. Francis Thompson. Hound of Heaven. Heaven.

Saturday.—Godstone to breakfast. "They are the danger of our time: the *only* danger. Already they rule half the world, soon they will be ruling it all. All this trouble in India, all these plots you hear of everywhere, it's all them. A grabbing unscrupulous lot, a danger to civilisation, and, above all, a danger to England. Look at the Marconi business! Look at the Silver Deal! Look at Sidney Street! Look at Alfred Mond!" (But I was looking at *him*.) "Scrambled eggs, yes. But" (quickly) "no bacon, please. Since Dizzy, whichever way you turn in politics, there are nothing but Rothschilds and Monds and Isaacs and Samuels. In the House of Lords there's hardly anything else, what with Swaythling, Michelham, Rothschild——"

"That's only three," I ventured, "out of six hundred or so."

"Anyway, leaving our own country aside, you can't deny that they are the ruin of Russia. Though, thank God, there's a good healthy pogrom now and then over there; that makes their blood run about the streets a bit. France is going to the dogs through them. All the republicans are ex-Dreyfusards—while as for the royalists, with Arthur Meyer and that lot! In the States as in England, they've collared the Stock Exchange and the Bar and the Press. They collar Christianity, too, whenever they can: old General Ikey Booth, for instance. Salvation Army indeed! Sheeny Army, I call it. They are financing these Balkan wars. And who really killed Teddy? Max Nordau, Mendelssohn, Nietzsche, Kingsley, Karl Marx, Browning, Beerbohm Tree, Spinoza. . . . Look at that poor dear little Illustrious Person at Magdalen. Who's pushed his way next to him in the college photo? A Gentile? You bet not! The vermin——"

"Oh, steady! And let's change the subject. Hating men because of their nationality strikes me as rather daft, dafter

than other forms of hate. Especially as most Jews are pleasant. Strauss, for instance, is quite as nice as you or me."

"Nicer than us? My poor dear Lee, he's a Jew!"

Poor dear Godstone! (Goldstein?)

De Lacroix to lunch. Cycled to Abingdon with Dysart. Dined at the Puseum. Went on to reception given by the Indian Club in honour of Rabindranath Tagore, then in the heyday of his English fame; I was one of the white members of the reception committee. About a fifth of us present, including the Poet Laureate, were white or whitish. Tremendous, if mystical, enthusiasm prevailed. In eastern fashion—though, truth to tell, the reception was held in Buol's upstairs room—we garlanded him with roses, though I remember more clearly the buffet: wonderful white brimming éclairs.

For the foam-flowers endure when the rose-blossoms wither. Tagore said little: inscrutable Buddha and all that.

Thursday.—Steele and Valentine Seer to breakfast. Mr. E. Marsh's 'Georgian Poetry' was then interesting us all. I said—I always maintain it was I who said it first—"Why shouldn't some of us in Oxford who are poets" (*i.e.*, ourselves) "get out an Oxford anthology on the same lines?" And so we gave birth to the first volume of the Oxford Poetry series, which is, I believe, still appearing. Worked on my Union speech, as I had to speak that evening at a big debate graced by the presence of minor Ministers. Spoke badly, but better than my leading opponent at the forthcoming elections. Gained perhaps five votes. In bed read Pascal.

Saturday.—After a ten o'clock lecture on Fustel de Coulanges, ran back to my rooms in sudden rain: almost the first dark day of the term. In the hall my landlady stopped me.

"Mr. Czelten rang up, sir; it's important he said." I was surprised, as I hardly ever used the telephone, and in nearly three years at Oxford had only twice or thrice had a call. "Would you 'phone him at Magdalen he said, sir, as soon as you came in?"

I got him in a moment.

"Yes, I want to see you at once, it's something rather queer." Immediately I feared the worst: some Union disaster, perhaps, some new Smarmian feat of mud-slinging; mud that would stick. Or something else, quite different.

"Not bad news," he went on reassuringly, "on the contrary. You remember I promised you a good turn for that Alpine drain-pipe night, don't you? Can I come round and see you now, because I have people coming to lunch, and must see you first."

"Well, what is it?" I asked, as he came into my room ten minutes later.

"It's this. Do you want to spend the Summer Vac. in Russia?"

Ah!

I stared. "What's wrong?" he said.

"Nothing. What's it all about? It's some idiotic joke?"

My mind was working in one narrow channel, one narrow red-ink channel. Where did it enter Russia? First of all western Poland, then through southern Poland well south of Warsaw, then across the Ukraine and the steppes, north of the salt Caspian—

"It's not a joke at all. Listen. A week ago I had a letter from Paris from a Polish friend—or rather he's a friend of my father's, because his father and mine were at the University at Prague together—a man a few years older than you or me, a Pole. Lelewel's his name, Prince Julian Lelewel.* He's mostly lived abroad, out of Poland, I mean, in Prague and Vienna and Rome, very rich, an awfully good sort, rather a dreamy brute, but quite amusing, and, in any case, extraordinarily decent for a Pole. In this letter he said he was coming over to England for the first time, and to Oxford, and that he'd like to see me, so that I could pilot him about, and so on. He wrote a similar letter to Klobukowski."

"Who's Klobukowski? I've heard of him vaguely."

"A Pole at the House, one of the very few Slavs up. Anyhow, Lelewel asked me to meet him at the station; he wired again from London this morning. I met him at the station about an hour ago, took him to the Clarendon and got him a room; then we went along to Magdalen. We talked about Poland a bit, and Vienna, and my father. Then I said to him, 'There's something in this. What's the real reason you came to Oxford?' 'To see Oxford, of course,' he replied. 'And the other reason?' I asked. He seemed to collect his

* Pronounced *Lelly-vell*.

thoughts ; then, speaking very deliberately, as though he were overhearing someone far away saying something, and was repeating it without knowing what it meant : ‘ Well, it’s this : I don’t speak English ’—(“ What language do you speak to him in ? ” I interrupted. “ In French sometimes, but chiefly in Russian,”)—‘ and I want to learn it. Everyone speaks it nowadays. I want to find an Englishman who would come and spend the summer with me at my place in Poland, not exactly as a tutor, or to give me lessons, but someone who, while regarding himself as a guest, would talk English to me. I would pay him whatever he liked, though if he insisted on it he could come as an ordinary guest, and in any case of course I would pay all expenses. As I am staying in Paris now, and have got my car there ’ (he was speaking in a normal way again) ‘ and intend to return to Warsaw by car, that might be a sort of extra inducement. What I thought was that you might know someone you could recommend, someone reasonably intelligent and amusing, and yet a proper Englishman, though not too English, you know, or too puritan, someone likely to get on with all my odd relatives in Poland, and who knows sufficient French to explain English to me in it. I thought Klobukowski or you might have a friend you could introduce me to.’ ‘ Several,’ I replied, thinking of you and two or three others.”

“ Which others ? ” I snapped.

“ Oh, Kerr and De Lacroix and Basil Nutt and Glacister-Gann. ‘ But,’ I said to Lelewel, ‘ I wouldn’t altogether like to have to choose, because most of them would probably jump at the idea, and it would be difficult. What I had better do is ask you to meet three or four of my friends whom I think most suitable, and you will choose your man. Is there no special sort of thing that would help in fixing on anybody? a man who hunts, or rides, or keen on music or books ?’ Then Lelewel became queer again, and spoke as though he were reciting a creed, very solemnly. ‘ Yes, there are three or four conditions. You will think me mad for mentioning them. Do you swear that you won’t ask me any questions about them, and that you will say nothing about them to your friends, only finding out from them indirectly whether they fit in with these conditions ? I don’t know myself why I

want you to swear, but I know it's serious.' 'Yes, I swear, I said. 'On the Cross?' said Lelewel, producing a gold crucifix from his waistcoat pocket. 'Yes' I replied. 'Kiss it' he said. I kissed it."

"You mustn't tell me!" I burst in. Czelten, remember, was not moral. "If you swore it on the Cross you mustn't tell me." I knew he would; by my interruption, however, I had saved my face with God.

"'Well, then' Lelewel said, 'the first condition is this.' His eyes were closed now. 'The initials of his name must be E.L.' That made me sit up, because, though I had thought of several people, all the time I had really meant to wangle it for you. 'Secondly' he went on, 'he must be twenty one years old, not more than twenty one years seven months and not less than twenty one years two months.'—By the way, how old are you?"

"Twenty one years four and a half months," I replied, with what voice I had, "I was twenty one on January 20th last."

"I thought so. You're trembling, Manuel. So am I. But don't let's give way till I've finished. Then Lelewel went on sleepily, as though in a trance, 'Third condition is this. The man I want to come with me to Poland must have spent last Holy Thursday near the line drawn on this map,' and he brought this map out of his pocket."

I snatched it from Czelten. It was a foreign-looking map of England, folded as though it had been a long time in someone's pocket; in a corner was printed 'England und Wales.' In red ink ran a line coming from across the North Sea, running with blood-red arrows west-north-westwards, and passing a hair's-breadth north of Lichfield, which was marked in tiny print: *my* line, arrowed in the opposite sense.

"You hound!" I cried, "it's a trick. You've been rifling my papers, finding out my secrets, and this is a new joke of yours. Get out or I'll fling you out."

"Are you mad too?" cried Czelten.

He was thoroughly scared and clearly innocent. I saw that my ungenerous surmise was unfounded. "I'm sorry, Ivan," I said. "I'll explain that afterwards. Go on."

"Well, I told Lelewel he was raving mad, and that despite my promise on the Cross, I wanted to know what it was all

about. 'I don't know,' he said, and though for a moment I thought he was lying, suddenly I knew—as you know now with me—that he was telling the truth. Then I told him that, oddly enough, I did happen to know two men who tallied with two of his conditions: I wasn't of course aware how they had spent that particular Thursday of their Easter Vac., but I was sure they were both about twenty one, that they were both the sort of men he would like, and that both of them had the initials E.L."

"Who is the other? Eddie De Lacroix?"

Czelten nodded.

"But he's really E.D., not E.L. He's always so keen on a big D for his De. He's not E.L. at all really"; argumentatively, jealous that another should incur even the risk of a fate intended for me.

"Anyway, that doesn't matter. The way you cried out when you saw the map showed me you were the man. Besides, I knew it already, though what in the name of the devil——"

"That's it," I cried, "in the name of the Devil!"

I saw for the first time ever the shadow of Lichfield fear flit across Czelten's face. Impulsively he clasped my hand, half in terror for himself, half in sympathy for me. "Ah, I thought so. It's from the other place—dear Manuel. I'm afraid you've got to go through with it, but between us we shall pull you through. I have one or two spells; with one of them I killed a man once in Moscow. . . . From the moment Lelewel mentioned this business, I knew inside me that you were the man. At the same time, I told him that it wouldn't be a bad idea for me to go through all the E.L.'s in the official list of undergraduates. There were about half-a-dozen of them; Lane, the rowing blue, and a swine I know in Magdalen, and a couple of toothbrushless Taffies—Llewellyns, or however you pronounce it—in Jagers, and some Balliol Jew-boy with a name like Eliphas Levi; then Eddie De Lacroix and you. I said to Lelewel 'Shall I speak first to the two E.L.s that are friends of mine?' 'Yes,' he said. 'All right,' I said, 'but on condition you don't mention the matter to Klobukowski at lunch; let me try my two men first.'—Now then, Manuel, I want to know all about it. Why were you so wild just now?"

"I'll tell you if you'll promise to tell no one on earth, and somehow make me believe that you'll keep your promise. Cross-kissing doesn't seem to be much good."

"Don't worry, I like you a lot better than Lelewel, and liking people is the only Christian reason for keeping a promise."

Then, in haste, but omitting no relevant details, I told him the story set forth in the first three chapters.

Soon Czelten was crossing himself. When I had finished there was a long silence. "It's the Devil all right," he said in a low voice. Then again silence. Though it was noontide, darkness was descending.

We waited in enveloping fear. The door slowly opened. No one came in. We were glued to our chairs. If we did nothing HE would win. "Fight him!" I cried madly, getting up from my chair, and we clasped one another's hands, and prayed together. As slowly the door closed.

"When shall I meet your friend?" I asked, as soon as I could trust my voice.

"I thought I might bring him round to your rooms to tea to-day. Not that your seeing him makes much difference, my poor old Lee, for you're going, aren't you? You have decided to?"

"I haven't decided to," I cried. "Before the beginning of the world it was decided."

"I know, but I know also that it will come all right in the end. Kiss Gagool on the mouth; she's big magic."

About four o'clock, Czelten brought Prince Julian Lelewel round. He was a tall distinguished-looking man a little above thirty; something my idea of a young Grand Duke. His face was pale and his forehead high. The only arresting feature was his large tranquil eyes, which were strangely kind; but not quite normal. He could see other people whom the rest of us could not see. His general bearing was both manly and gentlemanly. He was what certain Englishmen—especially scurvy ones—call a white man.

After small talk we came to the matter in hand. Prince Lelewel told me what he wanted—Czelten had repeated his

requirements faithfully—an Englishman who would help him to acquire a knowledge of English, prepared to spend three or four months with him at his chateau in Russian Poland. Could I come to Paris the moment term was over? It was his intention to motor across Germany to Russia, and he wanted to leave as soon as possible.

He omitted all mention of the three conditions. He did not want to see anybody else as he was quite sure I would suit him down to the ground. Of course I would want a day or two to make up my mind, but in the meantime might we arrange financial and other details? I murmured vague objections touching my degree work; quickly he assured me that, in the event of my deciding to go, I could send all the books I might need across Germany by rail, while throughout the summer I could of course devote just as much time to study as I wanted. I should be absolutely free. I would be doing the favour, not he, etc.

The conversation was partly in French, which I spoke execrably, mainly in Russian, Czelten interpreting.

"I must have twenty-four hours to make up my mind. I'll let you know to-morrow."

After dinner I went round to Czelten's rooms: (Lelewel was at Klobukowski's). "It is not he who is the Devil," said Czelten, "I am almost sure of that. He's straight, but weak. My view is that there's some one else in it: these gipsies, this dwarf, that Zzww——"

"You think those words stand for real people!"

"Yes, alive people or dead ones—it's at their orders he's come for you, for *them* that he's doing this without knowing what he's doing. He's only an unwitting agent. There's magic at work on him: can't you see it? Stare through his eyes. . . . Why it's you that's wanted I can't guess. Of two things I'm certain though: that you are going, because you've got to go; and that, whatever you may have to pass through, you will come home to us in the end, and next Michaelmas term as ever is we shall all see you holding forth at the Union, lounging about the High, and wasting as of old the time and patience of your friends."

"Let's pray again," I said.

Simultaneously, instantaneously, we flopped down on the

floor. I did not open my heart to the Holy Spirit, but begged cravenly for protection amid the ills that were ahead. As I rose to my feet, I saw that Czelten was praying also : to President Wilson.

This I thought a shade idolatrous, blasphemous even, though few men perhaps would have thought it so half a decade later, at the end of 1918, in that moment when we witnessed the President's arrival in Paris and saw that blasé city welcome him not as you welcome a king but as you welcome a god, in that moment when, as Italian friends have told me, there was witnessed in Rome a triumph more triumphal than any which in ancient days the Imperial City knew, more radiant than the triumph of Scipio when he returned from the Punic Wars, than the three-days' triumph of Augustus when having conquered the three continents of the known universe he returned with chained and captive kings as Emperor of all the World, for if the streets were adorned with garlands not more glorious than of old this new Triumphator had conquered not with swords, but with words, and on his head was something more insolent, more awful, than the golden crown of Jupiter : a twentieth century top-hat. In his own country some cried ' The greatest American ever ' ; though in the Elysian fields when they heard it I think they smiled, that little band of friends, the noblest dead who had made and fought and saved the great Republic : Washington indulgently as a great soldier and gentleman would, Hamilton impatiently for he knew the world and the history of the world and the sane judgments of history, but Father Abraham chuckled aloud, chuckled till even on the face of Old Stonewall he won a flicker of mirth, and as the boasting grew louder and all Paradise heard the din, for a moment a smile lit up the grave majestic face of Robert Lee ; " Yet maybe they're right : who knows the judgments of the Lord ? " cried the greatest of them (and maybe Father Abraham was right) ; the while in the beaten suffering countries his name was uttered as the one word of hope, in Austria being coupled with Almighty God's ; even in England there were some who placed him on almost the same footing as the King. ' Contemptible ! ' I hear sycophant snorts afar from cis-Atlantic lickspittles who tongue the boots of Midas in whatever country for the moment

his central throne may be : ‘ Oh contemptible ! He hath railed on our noble prince ! ’ forgetting, these pickthanks, these men of facile loves, who would hedge the politicians with a divinity of servile awe, make comment a crime, forgetting that it was not manhood but godhead he aspired to, forgetting the inhuman blasphemy that tempted that poor incense-clouded brain, forgetting that even as with Herod the King who listened with nostrils quivering when the people gave a shout saying, ‘ It is the voice of a god and not of a man,’ so might the angel of the Lord smite him also, because he gave not God the glory.

(Though suppose Father Abraham was right ?)

“ What does your God say ? ” asked Czelten, as he rose from his knees.

“ I didn’t ask Him to say anything,” I replied. “ I just asked Him for protection.”

“ I ask my gods for information also. Wilson says it’ll be all right in the end.”

In the end ?

Next morning, after a sleepless night during which I had proved to my own dissatisfaction a hundred times over that I was deciding of my own free will.—“ Choose freely ; choose freely,” a voice said in my bedroom aloud—I told Prince Julian Lelewel that I accepted his offer.

I at once made all arrangements, told my friends, wrote to relatives, and for the few remaining days of term took lessons in spoken French. I told my two nearest friends the whole story and took their summer addresses, and Czelten’s—to be able to telegraph in case of need.

I spent a few days in London buying clothes, packing, obtaining my passport, etc., and on a fine June morning my Aunt E. and Czelten and Heine saw me off at Charing Cross, quitting for the first time my native island, Paris-bound.

CHAPTER V: PARIS

As I stepped off the boat at Boulogne, "I have burnt my boats," I said.

At Paris Lelewel met me at the station, in opera hat and cloak. Outside Delaunay-Belleville awaited us, huge and stately. She has not the perfection in repose, as of a statue, of Rolls-Royce the King, not the sveltness of Metallurgique, nor animal beauty of Fiat that makes the pulse throb faster, but is a dowager, majestic-moving, bringing about her into the motorage something of the port and presence of carriage days; widest wheeled, broadest flanked of all the motor family. Through bustling streets, along the imperial lamp-starred Champs Elysées, to a palace of luxury, an hotel such as I had never seen or imagined.

"What do you want to do?" asked Lelewel, whom I perceived to be even kindlier than Oxford hours had shown, even more surely not the spirit of the ring that compassed me about. "How marvellous it must be for you to be abroad for the first time. I wish *I* could still——. And in Paris, too, which is, after all——. What do you want to see? The streets, the chief sights, the museums and so on, of course; and like all pure young Englishmen, something of the night-life too?"

"Of course."

He had a habit of leaving his sentences unfinished, odder in that he himself was unaware of it; having completed his thought, he did not know that he had not also completed its translation into words. This habit was, I soon found, indicative of Lelewel's whole character, of a morbid unawareness that pervaded his each word and deed. Some of us are abnormally self-conscious; he was abnormally un-self-conscious. Our immortal souls are always troubling about our immortal souls; his did not know of its own existence.

He did not know he was alive.

I am not quite clear on the chronology of this first Paris night. There was dinner, luxurious; and a play. There

were friends of Lelewel's: two Frenchmen, an actress, a Chicago pork-packing queen and French duchess (all in one), a Pole or two, and the Baroness N., Russian and friendliest. There was early morning supper at the Pré Catalan in the Bois de Boulogne, and champagne and glitter and noise at Montmartre cabarets. Seeing life. Tossed suddenly from twenty years of the most Puritan provinces, of prudery and plain living, into this night world of wastrels and harlots, I reacted as any self-conscious young Puritan would. Excitement, disgust; enjoyment, anger; elation, depression, trod hard upon each other. Loathing of the garishness and luxury was alone perhaps above the pure-young-Englishman first-night-in-Paris average. But then so was the luxury. Soon loathing drove forth all ribalder rivals, and alone possessed my blood. I could have spat, and wished the universe in my spittle.

When, after dawn, we got back to the hotel, near weeping I flung myself on my bed.

"But why do you cry?" asked Lelewel with anxious gentleness.

"Because I'm a bloody fool," I blubbered, "and because I hate the selfishness of this life"—rudely—"of *your* life."

Passionate sincerity conceived the last three words, but fear and his firstling, craft, were in at the birth, urging 'Only be rude enough and the trip will be over, and your danger'; then, as I saw that Lelewel was not angry, but tickled, vanity claimed the phrase and rounded it rudely off. If insolence could not save me from evil, it should rivet me a friend.

"Why selfish?" he asked. "You've known me a day, and can't judge my life from one night's amusement. All I've been trying to do is to amuse you, and, and——. I try to amuse others, and I try to amuse myself. My motto is, 'Peace; Have a good time; Do what you can, when you think of it, for others; and Believe in God.'"

"Do you believe in God?"

"Idiot: don't you?"

"I'm not sure. I believe what I see inside me and there's not much God there, but evil in plenty, and I believe in that; it's a belief the world needs more. To believe vaguely in good, and as vaguely seek it, leads men and worlds nowhere. The great saints, who were first the great sinners, knew chiefly hate

and evil, and believing fled from and fought them. Hate rules the world ; the nations are devoured by hate of each other, and the classes in each nation, and the families in each class, and the individuals in each family. What the world needs most, I tell you, is the hatred of hate——”

“ No, it’s love,” said Lelewel.

“ No, hate of hate.”

“ I think I shall like you.”

“ I like you already.” Sentimentally, we shook hands ; and, so doing, unsentimentally I saw and seized a chance. “ But if we’re to be real friends, tell me, will you, here and now : what is the real reason you came to England to find me and are taking me to Poland now ? ” My voice was unsteady, and he stared, but not seeing me.

“ Why, the reason I told you. Because I want to talk English.” We were talking half in French, half in English, I correcting his English, he (though unpaid) correcting my French.

“ Those three conditions ? ” I said sharply, to prove him, forgetful that I was giving Czelten away.

“ God forgive him ! He swore on the Cross.” And Lelewel turned pale as evil approached him.

“ Those three conditions ” I droned as to hypnotise him, though I too was sport of the ill atmosphere that now was filling the room.

“ I don’t know. Before the Mother of God, I don’t know. I *had* to name them. Believe me ” he added piteously, and sank back in the chair.

Czelten was right. Here was no craft at all. He was a victim. A stronger than he was between us.

He got up quickly and, shunning my eyes, went out.

When I had undressed, I knelt down and said my prayers. I was in the middle of them, when Lelewel returned to get a pipe he had left on my dressing-table.

“ Ah, my friend ? ” he cried as I rose from my knees (whispering to God ; ‘ Believe it that I’ve prayed all that was still in my heart to pray ’), “ so though you weren’t sure just now whether you believed in God, I see you say your prayers.”

“ You don’t need to believe in God to say prayers,” defensively ; “ you only need to believe in prayer.”

"Atheists don't pray."

"Oh, don't they! I know one in Oxford, the type *par excellence* of our northern-board-school secularists, Huxley-mad and Haeckel-mad, who loved blaspheming, and said hourly that the universe was 'matter' and religion a mumbo-jumbo and a cheat. Well, I had my suspicions. One evening I went to see him about something, and finding his sitting-room empty, walked through into his bedroom on the off-chance he was there. Since Eden, men have risen from their knees with a million different faces, but God's never seen a face more flushed and pitiful than his. I haven't anyway. Since then I've liked him. Most famous atheists have been the same; some have deathbed repentances, some have a secret bedside repentance every night. Why even Frederick the Great felt the need of prayer, though his God lived in Geneva instead of heaven. After all those years of savage intrigue against Voltaire, and despite the hate, beneath all the grinning protestations of love, that had burned between them, in his old age that crowned old atheist skeleton would get down every evening on his knees and supplicate: 'Oh great Voltaire, Ora pro nobis!' Why even Ingersoll——"

"Frederick the Great," said Lelewel dreamily, "he killed Poland, he killed my country. He was the guiltiest of the three monarchs, three murderers, who slew the ancient Republic of Poland."

"And Voltaire was the guiltiest of the scribblers who slew the ancient Monarchy of France."

"And now the spirit of Frederick is killing Germany——"

"As the spirit of Voltaire is killing France——"

"Germany, I tell you!"

"Killing Germany? I should have thought she was very much alive."

"Her body, yes. But her soul is dying by inches. Besides——. She is filled with the hate you hate so. When she carries her hates to their logical conclusion, war—then it will depend on you."

"On me?"

"On England: on whether England joins in the Great War."

"There will be no Great War."

"I see them now dimly, there——. An army of ghosts that creeps forward, an army of ghosts that rises up to give them battle."

"They are only ghosts."

"Only ghosts? Ora pro nobis." He shuddered, crossed himself, and went out.

2nd Day.—Next day I slept till noon. Lelewel, who, after one night of the hotel, had moved into his flat near, came round in the car. We lunched at the Carlton. At the next table a foul old dyspeptic, a shaking jelly of flesh, swallowed a meal which for quality and quantity alike would have made Vitellius choke with apoplectic envy, though the Princeps would have gobbled it down less wolfishly, made less tumult as he masticated, sworn at the slaves less cruelly.

After lunch, we motored over this city: Notre Dame, the Sainte Chapelle and old Paris; the Rue de Rivoli, the Grand Boulevards and new Paris. An Englishwoman dined with Lelewel, or so she described herself, though she spoke less English than I French, explaining that she had left London at the age of eight and had never seen it since. She was most triumphantly dressed; in slim and shapely black, with Merry Widow hat. Lady, actress, harlot?—in those days I could not judge. All three, I should say now. After a music-hall, nude music-hall, we called at her theatre for Lelewel's own particular friend; not lady but the other two all right. The three of us took supper at the Café de Paris, full of rich food and swinish faces. Later, others joined the party, and quite a fleet of cars toured together the night places of Montmartre. Seeing life. Everywhere the orchestra of buck-niggers and pock-marked half-castes, discoursing their barbarous music from America, South or North—in those days Veritable Argentine Tango and Alexander's Ragtime Band crashed oftenest—to wriggling couples: wizened girls and flabby wantons of all ages from fifteen to fifty, children and hags, pressed and piloted by obese gallants, around and among the champagne laden tables of the lookers-on, English and German, Viking and Balkan, Russian and Polish, Dago and Yankee: the fat men and jewelled harpies of this planet. The ladies and women of our party were dancing, the men hardly

at all, who preferred to watch the dancers and appraise flanks and busts. Lechery was in the air, and paper toys and hurtling flowers and the throbbing drums of trans-Atlantic savagery. Between where I sat and the dancing space there was a skeleton partition, a kind of ornamental window-frame without window. Through it I watched the grinning niggers, the wriggling animals that pranced to their piping, the over-fed over-sexed hogs all around that peered and leered. They were in a cage ; I was peering through the bars ; the faces turned ape-like ; black baboons above, long-limbed capering monkeys and marmosets in middle, obese orang-outangs around. God ! Darwin's generations scampered backwards in a second, the faces were darker and hairier, beyond all doubt they were apes. It was a mocking miracle of the Lord's. How they were staring too : dear Saviour, it is I who am in the cage, and I the monkey——

I got up and stumbled blindly out to find a wash-place, to seek cold water for my brow. But the water was lukewarm, and the fetid place reeked : cocaine and rose petals, drains and face powder and sin. I walked unsteadily downstairs and stood at the street door. The night air refreshed me, and my views on humanity.

Indeed when I returned to the room, and found the Baroness N. full of comfort and understanding, I was avid to be comforted and understood, and in return graciously tolerant. I was a ' *jeune Anglais charmant* ' and a pure young man in his first shock with the night life of cities, and to comfort one such is a joy most flavoursome for one who is neither man, nor young, nor pure.

" These places are disgusting," she agreed confidentially, " the people and the atmosphere and everything ; I understand," and plied me with champagne. My pledge-book had been left in Albion, and now I drank greedily. I grew bright, and ever more tolerant.

" Oh, no, it's I who'm wrong. What is loathsome and morbid is to think all this gaiety loathsome and morbid. How cheerful they all are. The women enjoy it. Why shouldn't they ? " (indulgently). " As to the men, the old ones become young again, and the young ones become "—' old again ' : no, that wasn't sense——. " Anyway, it's better than starving, or

than slaving away in garrets, like—like sheamstresses. What's sheamstresses in French ? ”

Then came sleep, from which I awoke to find myself in Lelewel's car, sweeping through the lawns and groves of the Bois de Boulogne. White mists of dawn rose curtainlike from the sward.

“ Ah, you're awake,” said Lelewel gaily, and chuckled.

“ Why do you laugh ? ” I asked.

“ Because I'm amused, amused at the selfishness of our life ; of *your* life ! ”

The car deposited him at his flat near the Etoile, and Emile drove me home.

“ It's been marvellous,” I said.

“ For Monsieur, perhaps,” replied Emile. “ Monsieur has been amusing himself since noon. I have been working. Eighteen hours at a stretch, it is enough, you know. It's amusing in the theatres and restaurants no doubt, but dull in the car outside. Perhaps our day will come. No matter.” He shrugged his shoulders and smiled indifferently.

3rd Day (Lord's Day).—We motored out from Paris to spend the Sabbath at a chateau some twenty or thirty miles away, where history had happened and a sceptred king had died, now owned by a friend of Lelewel's, wife of a steel-sceptred king from beyond the sea : American Number Two, and friendlier than Armour'd Duchess. There was a numerous company of guests in the great salon : natives of the two Americas ; Austrians, Russians, Poles ; with an Infant of Spain, a Pretender's great-uncle, and even a seasoning of Frenchmen. For an hour we sat round and listened to whatever best in music gold—and steel—could buy. In the intervals they jabbered : jabber as inconsequent as Oxford's, but on more expensive subjects. Liszt, Strawinsky ; Bakst, Nijinsky. Women ; clothes ; racing. Women. Royalism. There were few Frenchmen, so all were royalists. The dirty Republic ; the King over the water. The vulgarity of mere money. Mere money. Money.

After the concert, there was a general move out of the house into the beautiful park. Lelewel was with friends, and as I knew hardly any one, I loafed uncertainly on the terrace,

ashamed of appearing patently unknown and alone. But there, as everywhere, were cormorants ready to pounce. The first was an elderly Russian, a prince as you will have guessed.

"I've not seen you at Mrs. Y.'s parties before. English? Indeed, you astound me! Your French is perfect. I see you came with Julian Lelewel. Otherwise I might have told you what I think of Poles in general, though he personally of course is altogether charming. But as to the majority of them, of all the conceited, shifty, false, feckless——." I heard him through, and began to realise, more physically than through the Oxford history-books, something of the pure hates of Europe (for our pale English hates are diluted with mere scorn, visited on mere Brahmins and blackamoors), but was not responsive enough for him to think it worth while continuing.

Alone again, I shifted unostentatiously nearer to a gay group, hoping to be spoken to. From this group there detached himself another pouncer, not a political-propagandist pouncer, but a preening pouncer, in search of a victim to show off to, a vessel for patronage and prattle. Good day! He had not seen me before at one of Mrs. Y.'s parties. Was I staying long in Paris? Most amusing people to be met with at Mrs. Y.'s. He would tell me all about them. Did I live in France?

"I'm English," I said, "and this is the third day of my life out of England. I wish I spoke French properly. You of course are a Frenchman?"

He preened. "Oh, dear me, no: how delightful of you!" in sudden languid English.

"How absurd of you," I retorted, "talking French to me when you see how preposterously I talk it and when you're English yourself."

Now he squirmed and writhed with pleasure. "You're wrong both times: you don't talk French preposterously at all, you talk it excellently, with a slight accent of course, but attractive" (I fought my will-to-preen), "and secondly, I'm no more English than I'm French. But it's wonderful of you to have thought my English so perfect. Guess my nationality." An oft-repeated plea, I fancied.

"Well, what on earth are you then?" I cried, irritated by

his smile, jealous of his gift of tongues that ministered to so much lawful pride : " Eskimo ? " for I had rattled off the Romance Republics of America from Texas to Cape Horn, drained the Balkans dry.

" An American," he coo'd. " How delighted I am you thought I was English ! I've been told I'm the only American in Paris with a really pure British accent. The Yankee twang is really too awful, don't you think ? You dislike Yanks, don't you ? "

" Some of them, violently."

And I turned heel and fled ; and I learnt that when one is loitering across the middle of a wide lawn, dramatic leave-taking is hard to achieve.

For a space I walked alone. The next solitary I encountered was a youth, lolling on a garden bench near the tennis courts.

" Most exciting tennis," he opened, friendlily. I was suspicious now, and before we got much further thought I had better put the nationality question, clearly so important in this international world.

" I'm French," was his odd reply.

Soon we were well away on Napoleon and St. Helena and the rights and wrongs of Hudson Lowe. Next to Lelewel and the Baroness N., he was the most likable human, I decided, I had found this side of the Channel.

Tea was served under a great oak tree near the chateau : a preposterous meal comprising lobster mayonnaise, ortolans in aspic, pâté de foie gras, strawberries with whipped cream, and three subtle sorts of ices, a meal to which many of the dyspeptic guests could not do proper justice, a meal whose money-value, I reckoned, would have fed two poor families for a month, or four for a fortnight, eight for a week, fifty-six for a day. For protection from my American friend, I claved the more closely to my French one.

" May I present you to my mother ? " said the latter, leading me towards a large-featured decisive-looking woman more severely dressed than most of them.

" Monsieur—— ? "

" Lee."

" My mother, Madame Réjane."

When I had recovered from this, and her quick *basso* brilliance, and my share in the poor families' tea, I bethought me to see over the interior of the chateau. The guests were out in the grounds, so I should be able to see it in peace. As I walked through into the big tapestry room, however, I found there, lounging on a sofa, a grey-haired Frenchman who Lelewel had told me was G., the famous composer.

We entered into conversation. He was an amusing talker ; tapestry, pictures, taste in general, the philosophy of art, the philosophy of conduct, the superiority of the artist to morals—I was not clever enough to see, or my having to concentrate on merely understanding the unfamiliar sounds hindered my seeing, how I was being led, sheeplike, to some sought slaughter place of Monsieur G.'s.

Playing on my vanity : " You agree then that however much you might be unwilling to share another man's views on life, follow his aspirations and desires, yet if those were his honest views and aspirations, and he expressed them honestly to you, however much you disliked them, loathed them, you would respect the liberty of the individual, and the individual not less for having said what few men ever do : what he meant."

" Yes," I said.

He got up, seized me gently by the wrists, attempted a ludicrous embrace and murmured : " Then my one wish in the world is for you to come home with me to Paris to-night."

By all the recognised rules for conduct in such emergencies, I should have ' knocked him down.' But Monsieur G. was heftier than I, and physical courage, especially in cases where unlikely to avail me, has rarely been my distinguishing quality. Besides, I was more interested in watching him than in wanting to harm him, and in assessing the respective percentages of surprise, fear, disgust, amusement, vanity, that composed the complex emotion of the moment.

" You're wondering what you ought to think," said Monsieur G., disappointed but not crestfallen. " You're shocked and amused, and above all flattered. Flattered, that's it, though you'd admit it never."

I made no reply ; abruptly broke off this the oddest acquaintanceship the day had so far yielded, and went out into the grounds to look for Lelewel. I could not find him, nor any

other of the guests, most of whom had I think departed. My searchings led me to a beautiful rose garden, where, in the air of the soft June evening, a little of the peace of God enveloped my soul, and I strove for a moment to forget His creatures. I stooped and, hating man, rubbed my face into a rose.

‘That’s real beautiful of you, just too cute for anythin’”—God, another vile human; a fellow-countrywoman of our hostess’: Number Four. As I blushed to the colour of the rose, she reassured me kindly. “You can be certain I’ll say nothin’. It was just lovely.”

She spoke as an accomplice, a sister soul, and as such bared her innermost being to my gaze. Roses, flowers in general, all Nature; the moon; ideals; Something Bigger, Something Better. She was an ugly painted little woman of maybe thirty five, raucous, kindly and intolerable. Her voice croaked amorously through the rose-clad air. A gramophone chimed in with Hitchy Koo from some unseen horrible spot hard by.

“I guess that’s spoilt our lovely talk,” said my latest friend, and we walked towards the house. Lelewel was waiting for me, the car ready for our return to Paris. I thanked my hostess; dodged Monsieur G. and some others; went into the house to get my hat and coat. Here I found Number Four; eager, bright-eyed, terrible.

“I’m going back to Paris too,” she whispered quickly. “Come in my car instead of Lelewel’s. I’ve already suggested it to him, for his car’ll be pretty full with others. Now for your trip to Russia: I guess a loan’d be handy——”

And she held out a five hundred franc note, which I took, reflecting that it was the largest sum of money I had ever had in my hand, tore it into two, four, eight, sixteen bits, and threw them in her face; said nothing, for anything said would have been anti-climax, and ran.

As soon as we were back in Paris, and the carload of other guests deposited, I recounted to Lelewel the day’s experiences. Number Four amused him most; then Monsieur G.

“You said you wanted to see everything,” he said. “We’ll go to-night, if you like, to a different sort of cabaret, where the Monsieur G.’s assemble, and the Madame G.’s.”

“The Madame G.’s?”

It was a night restaurant, *Urania Bar*, near the Place Pigalle. Unlike the other haunts I had seen, it had the appearance of a large drawing-room rather than of a public resort. There was less noise, less gaiety. There were four times as many women as men, sitting together in couples at small tables. We men, huddled together at one end of the room, were clearly spectators only ; though it took me a minute to comprehend the significance of the decorous scene, to locate clients and self-saleswomen, and for the mannish fanatical gazes of the former and the boyish venal posings of the latter to burn themselves in. Some of the girls resembled the sacred animals of an Egyptian cult, some were tousled tomboys, others mere masquerading males, with man's collar and tie, cigar in mouth, arms akimbo. On the walls were prints and portraits, including three improbable sepias, labelled Christine of Sweden, Sophie Arnould, Sappho : daft tribadistic trio. There was half-hearted dancing, never more than two or three couples at a time getting up from their tables and their gazing. Not pleasure haunt, but sorrow haunt. Misery spoke aloud in their faces. They had no joy in the goddess they worshipped : Aphrodite Lesbos, stillborn of the foam.

Perhaps wine would bring jollity ; I drank immoderately. Near us a little Jewish girl, twelve years old perhaps, fell asleep, her head in the lap of the big Scandinavian who owned her, a Viking in evening dress.

" Let's try the other room," said Lelewel, yawning.

Here were the men and boys, if such they may be called. The atmosphere was a shade livelier, or so to my champagne-watered imagination it appeared. Some of the boys were viler than any of the girls we had seen, sleek hairless minions in tight-fitting suits, with snoutish faces, like dainty pigs. Others were pale and wretched. One such, a fragile youth, with the movements and manners of a nervous schoolgirl, came up to our table. Lelewel made it clear to him that we were not customers.

" I'll stay with you if I may," he said, " that is, till my friend comes. He's on the Bourse ; very chic, very rich."

He reminded me of some one I knew, some one we all knew, some one everybody knew. Who was it ? He was paler, less

manly, yet the same. I looked at the youth sitting opposite and I looked in my mind at the portrait of the other, no whit less vivid. But the name of the other? My fuddled brain fumbled and found it not. It was some one English, of that I felt sure. If I talked deliberately of other things, the name would come.

"You're very English looking," I said.

This pleased him; it is a compliment which, true or untrue, rarely fails to win.

"Yes," he said, smiling wanly. "My mother was Spanish, but she used to tell me my father was either American or English. She wasn't sure, she had so many friends at that time, you see. I think it was the American; I'd rather it was the Englishman."

At last, with a loyal shock, I had it.

"Do you know," I said to American Number Five, "you're fantastically like——"

This overjoyed him. He turned to queenly friends at other tables. "Do you hear?" he cried. "This English Monsieur says I'm fantastically like——"

"——! ——!" they cried, and gave feminine cheers for England. Before I knew properly what was afoot, I was hoisted on to a table and was delivering in French unnameable, a fervid oration on the glory of Gaul, the solidity and eternity of the Entente Cordiale.

"*Vive l'Entente Cordiale*," cheered the powdered company. "And *Vive* the two ——s, yours and ours!"

Then to a worse place, where one of the clothesless dancers fell down fainting, in the middle of a bestial dance. All the other dancing animals became women again, crowded round the dying girl, brought water, brandy; carried her out of the fetid room. The onlookers dodged each other's eyes, coughed, made ready to slink. The foul old manageress, seeing custom on the wing, gave sharp orders to orchestra and girls to resume the interrupted dance. None would obey. As we were leaving, word went round that the girl was dead. Each of us gave money for graveside flowers.

"I want to go back to the hotel," I said, "I can't stand more of this." (Christ, *stop* the world!)

"Soon," said Lelewel, "but I promised the Baroness N. we'd meet her at the *Mecque* about four o'clock."

Here, as I preached sleepily to the unmoral Russian, she capped me with worldlier facts.

"Paris, my dear, what you've been seeing is not Paris. You're an innocent young Englishman abroad for the first time, longing, like all your youths, your fathers of families, your deacons, your curates, to 'see' Paris, words uttered with a British snigger. Know well that Paris is the most cultivated, the most intellectual and the most workaday capital in the world. We're not Paris. We—Lelewel and Prince S. and Mrs. Y. and the rest of us—are merely that section of the cosmopolitan crowd that has the most money in its pockets, and happens to have its headquarters here. Yet we're ruining her, I admit, we and the hundred lowlier *mondes* who resemble us, for night-life and vice in all their forms are assuming such proportions that even the real Lutetia, the capital of this most laborious clear-brained of all nations, is beginning to be tainted. It is true. Even since I first came here eighteen years ago the industry has doubled. Find the total figure of the performers and stage-hands and officials at all the indecent hells and shows, and the personnel of the night-bars and the brothels, and the landlords and the shareholders, and the hundred thousand women on the streets, and the bullies and the slavers, and the printers and the publishers and the book-sellers whose bread depends on the ever vaster trade in evil books and pictures. . . . Add them up; you'll find that at least one inhabitant of Paris in ten depends directly or indirectly for his living on the commercial exploitation of this one instinct. France is partly to be blamed for the extreme licence the Republic permits, we foreigners not less who crowd here like swine to wallow. We Russians are the worst of all, who spend the year's labour of a moujik in ten minutes in some bawdy bar. One day the reckoning will come. My husband's a general, and my sister a lady-in-waiting of the Emperor's sister, but I say the day of reckoning will come. Yes, it is we who are the chief culprits. What cant about Paris and the French!"

"But," I objected, "why then is Paris the chief centre? Why isn't it say Moscow or London?"

"London! Do you know your London?"

"I've stayed there," I replied, thinking of my aunt's respectable suburb; naughty furtive hours in the British Museum and Westminster Abbey; my Lord's Day of multiple chapel-going, so like this Lord's Day; the night-life of Exeter Hall.

"Well, so have I." And another London, a London of orgies and blackmail and the commerce in children, was lovingly described. "Oh British hypocrisy! It's merely that in Paris the thing is opener, and the proportions bigger——."

"Ah, so openness makes things worse! Where there's British hypocrisy, the proportions of evil are less. *Vive* British hypocrisy!"

"How sweet you are. If I were not too old I should love you.—Then again, in Paris the obscenity of music-halls and Press corresponds more to what the people, and the foreigners, really want, not what they say they want, but what they'd go to see at home if there were no risk of anyone seeing them. For once one of the old accusations one nation flings at another is justified. Yes, you hypocrite English——!"

And we bandied anew the unanswerable arguments that prove, and that disprove, the ancient taunt.

Outside was daylight. Before returning home, we went for a motor drive in the Bois. At one of the luxury restaurants among the trees the car drew up; why, I do not remember, as the place was closed. The air was soft and the birds of dawn were singing. Chairs were scattered about under the trees, near a kind of music pavilion. On one of these stood a man in evening dress, one of the most bloated and selfish-mouthed humans I have ever seen, speechifying and hiccoughing and gesticulating for the benefit of a more peaceful drunk lying across another chair; tipsily desecrating God's morning air. His accent was unmistakeable: Number Six. As he bawled, he kept stretching out his arms, with the breast-stroke gesture. "I'm schwimmin' sir, schwimmin' to shafety." (Hiccough.) "Soon I shall be shafe. In a minute I shall get to you. You will be shaved too. Gee, I shall make all the world shafe——"

Shafe for democracy.

Now all the loathing my heart had stored throughout that

day and night wreaked itself on this tippler. "The hound," I said aloud, and generalising, as hate always does: "They're all of them hounds. Hark to his belching salute to the sunrise. And some think they're a civilised race!" ; generalising, as hate always does. As when espying in the streets of London or Frankfort or Cologne a concourse of obese Jew sweaters or money-changers, one thirsts for the blood of all Israel ; witnessing some hoggish gesture of a square-head criminal *Offizier*, a cruelty in corsets, one spits on all Germans, young and old ; seeing some vicious mean rat of a little Frenchman, one reviles the forty million Gauls ; noting abroad some hard-faced Chadband, scorning great civilisations as proud as his, jingling loud money in his pocket, wearing loud holiness on his lips, then one angers, with shame commingled, against our whole Philistipe-Pharisee race.

But if you like a man, say Spaniard, generalisation comes snail-pace to your seat at Barcelona café, and before you have come to formulate "How nice the Spaniards are!" rifles have opened across the Ramblas, and corpse of anarchist or capitalist rolls into the gutter. Hate's swifter generalisation wins the day.

"Shafe—shafe——"

We left him retching ; and so home to bed.

4th Day.—Versailles. As it was a Monday, Republic's cleaning-day, the interior of the Palace was not accessible : but we saw the park and the Trianons, and spent an hour with the Maintenon and Marie Antoinette.

In the evening Lelewel took me to the Théâtre des Champs Elysées, then newly opened, to see the Russian Ballet. Nijinski and Karsavina were then in their heyday, though the Ballet was still fighting prejudice and hate in the Western capitals, enemies that were better for it than one of its principal later allies, Snobbery—Snobbery with all his sons: Success Snobbery, the hairiest and most powerful ; Intellectual Snobbery, a pickthank wretch ; Abreast-of-the-Times Snobbery, a silly but not over-offensive fellow ; Deep-Mysteries-of-the-Russian-Soul-Snobbery, most pitiful ass. This evening, as I remember, the first thing on the programme was Daphnis et Chloé. Later the *Après-Midi d'un Faune* was

given for the first time in Paris. Though I had neither mind nor eyes for anything but the beauty of the music and the dancer, I soon became half-consciously aware that beyond the sunlit grove was a darker land, swept by ruinous storm. Around, behind, above, there were murmurs, rumblings ; then as the last violin subsided and the curtain fell, fiercely the tempest broke. Half the audience were on their feet, hissing, howling, imprecating. One murderous-looking old man, as slabby a beast as the eyes would wish to shun, shook his fist in prudish fury at the stage. An aristocratic old lady in a box, hawk-nosed and horrible, brandished a great ostrich feather and, aiming at the orchestra, spat. Meanwhile two currents of applause, one timorous, in the stalls, to which Lelewel and I belonged, and another, bolder, in the gallery, took courage, joined together and swelled, till they equalled the enemy's voice. The first moment had been ugly ; later the scene took more the character of two hordes of football fans : Hypocrisy Hotspur v. Enthusiasts United. For full ten minutes the out-shouting continued, until both hate and love were wearied ; lungs and palms worn out. The west centre of Paris, oh what a droll square mile for Mrs. Grundy to demonstrate in !

Since writing the above, I have chanced upon Monsieur Jean Cocteau's description of the first night of the *Sacre du Printemps*, given by the same company in the same theatre, and at about the same time, and am reassured to find that my memory has not heightened the colours ; which check on its veracity may reassure the reader too, and leave him with an open mind, if, indeed, he has not already one such, for all that I shall recount later ; open even for truth which, if not stranger than fiction, is swifter to raise suspicion in our fiction-fed minds. On the *Sacre* night, it appears to have been the music only that raised the storm. With the *Après-Midi*, my impression was that the supposed indecency kindled the fire, for which the insolent beauty of the music was fuel. Remark that M. Cocteau devotes some lines to the many ' *Snobismes* ' that between them filled the theatre : *Sur-Snobisme*, *Contre-Snobisme* and others. Hurrah, have you caught me plagiarising ? ' What proof have we, except your own word, that you hadn't read Cocteau first ? ' None ! And we are both of us dull dogs, so it does not matter a rouble.

As I was standing up to watch the subsiding tumult, I saw, a few rows behind, staring as I stared, the first girl mine eyes had ever yet in this life *beholden*. I was trembling, my heart beat fast, fervently.

Love at first sight.

She was seventeen or eighteen, not I thought French, judging from the un-French-looking father and mother on either side who guarded her. I was feasting on her, worshipping her, kissing her. Smiling she kissed me back.

"I'm going out for some air," I said to Lelewel, "there's a quarter of an hour's interval."

Love at first night.

She signed that she too would come. Father and mother sat stolidly in their places. Lelewel followed me; I dodged him in the promenoir.

I found her at once. My heart thumped, my cheeks blazed, my spirit sang. She was slim and marvellous. I looked a fool, did not mind, dared not speak.

"Pahley-vou onglay?" she said looking me for a moment in the eyes, taking me altogether prisoner.

"I'm English too," I said.

"No, I'm American" (Sacred Number Seven). "But listen, quick. As you're English, can't we meet in London: don't you live there? Dad and Ma are going there for two weeks. To-morrow we're leaving Paris."

"And the day after to-morrow I'm leaving for Russia, and shan't be near England for three months."

"When I shall be back in New York. Oh, it's real wicked."

"It's vile. I've never kissed anyone before."

"Neither have I. But I want to now, and I guess you do. And I'll never see you again. Dad's saved up years to do this one European trip real fine: and I suppose I'll never see Europe again, nor you. It's real wicked."

For once, somewhere at the back (for the face of her filled all the forefront of consciousness) Generalisation was racing up Delectable Mountain: *this* was what Americans were really like, earth's loveliest race. The very accent I Englishly scorned was now an added charm: Love's dialect.

"Can't we do anything?"

"No, it's too fine to be real: you'll be my dream-boy."

"Only dreams are real, so I'll have you always. Don't forget," I pleaded, "I shall never forget." Lelewel saw us, smiling afar. "Remember always the first kiss, yours and mine. That bell means the interval's over. Will you shake hands, and as we shake, pretend we're kissing again?"

Amid the scampering seat-regaining throng, we shook hands; and did more than pretend.

Back in my seat under Lelewel's laughing eyes (though he had not seen the consummation), my sleeve touching his friendly mockery, through all the Spectre of the Rose I went on pretending and recreating the moment of non-pretence.

At the end of the performance, I ran for another gaze, but missed her. And am missing her still.

You must be nearly thirty now, and are probably married. But if they publish me in the States, I hope you will see this page, see it, and kiss.

After supper at the Café de Paris, Lelewel took me on to a cabaret, one of the 'real' Parisian cabarets this time, where the singers make their own songs and the audience swells the chorus. One of the performers, a greybeard ancient in threadbare suit, acclaimed by the here at last chiefly French assemblage, recited verses, made on the spur of the moment, on topical themes the audience chose, choosing also the poets the old man was to parody: Villon, Béranger, Verlaine.

I too would make poetry, on the face that filled my heart. To sing my dear one must be made not too easy a task, or the song would find less favour in Love's eyes. I must beset my muse with hindrances, make hard my plectrum's pathway. How?

"How?" said the enemy inside, "by having your model chosen for you—against you—as with old greybeard up there."

"Choose then."

"Let me see," he replied, "the old man made his last poem after Villon. Villon ends with an N. What English poet does? Why, Walt Whitman."

"He's American."

"The more appropriate for her, the more gallantly difficult for you."

I mused, sucking my pencil, and on bare back of programme

wrote these lines, which are not so good as I then thought them :

Here in Paris
 I salute you, Miss Manhattan
 You are she I was seeking ;
 Surely somewhere else I lived a life of joy with you ?
 I am he you were seeking ;
 Surely somewhere else you lived a life of joy with me ?
 Salute me, Miss Manhattan
 Here in Paris !
 We are to wait, Camerada ;
 We are to wait sadly (*or bravely*) (*or gamely*) till we
 meet again ;
 We are to see to it that we do not lose each other ;
 We are to watch to it that the kiss of this eventide
 dwells in our hearts for ever.
 Will you wait, Camerada ?

(How dare the fool reproduce such sorry muck ?—Search your own programme-backs, Camerado ; fossick and rummage among your own sweet-and-twenty bits of paper : are there no verses as sorry there ?—Er, perhaps, I don't say there aren't ; but good taste and commonsense forbid me to print them.—Or fear and vanity ?—I'm talking of *you* ; and I say you're a tasteless fool, if you've produced such muck, to roll in it.—Good ! At least I'm not rolling alone ; there's Walt and a thousand others of the Great Companions—and *Allons !* after the Great Companions, and to belong to them !—)

" *Allons !* " Lelewel was saying, " I'm bored with this, Lee."

" And I'm as wide awake as springtime," I retorted as we left the cabaret and gained the open air, and, forgetting Emile, asked that we might drive all over Paris in the empty morning streets.

We travelled for an hour and more from one changing quarter to another, near sunrise climbing the Sacred Mount to the diadem of Paris. The church was open. Lelewel knelt and prayed ; I stared at the altar, and prayed too. Here was the peace of God ; I was Protestant, but felt Him here in this temple of Mother Church.

As the car crawled down the winding streets from the

basilica, we passed the statue of a bound and suffering youth.

“Who’s that?”

“The Chevalier de la Barre.”

The nineteen-year-old boy fool who had not uncovered when some procession passed; whom Mother Church had tortured, mutilated, mocked; who, fainting, steadfastly refused to give the names of his ‘accomplices’; whose boy’s head She then cut off.

5th Day.—With the Baroness N. I visited sites of the Revolution, some the guide books give, and others: the desolate house of Cagliostro, prince of sorcerers, the cookshop where Robespierre, prince of the Revolution for a season, took his frugal meals, the ramshackle workshop where Marat printed *Ami du Peuple*.

The usual evening round, by now well-nigh unbearable. Folies-Bergère. Then the annual charity fête of the actresses of Paris: ending with a battle of roses, and for me a fight of two selves, two sylphs! But though the little French lady who started the war was soft and alluring, as bellicose as Eve the first mother of us all or as Lady Potiphar mother of many, and though my spirit was half willing and my flesh exceeding weak, yet shame was strident—“Twenty-five hours only from first kiss to first crime?”—and as Joseph I conquered, withal more garmented than he, and Miss Manhattan won.

The fête was over earlier than Lelewel had anticipated. Waiting for Emile, we paced up and down the neighbouring dark alleys.

A woman grazed us with her child, a little girl of seven or eight.

Last Day.—We shopped. I also packed, and reflected, and sketched a chart of my soul’s progress, a morality graph of his six Parisian days. There were spurts as well as sags, but the general direction was slowly downwards: east-south-east.

The dowager, who never took to the high roads, was left behind for the summer in a garage, and it was Lelewel’s new Rolls-Royce that about six o’clock on a June evening Emile steered out of the Place Vendôme into the Rue de Rivoli, eastward between the habitations of the poor, out through the eastern gate of Paris.

CHAPTER VI: ACROSS EUROPE— ROLLS-ROYCE

For our journey to Russia we had the choice of three routes : a northerly one across Belgium and Prussia, through imperial Berlin, entering Congress Poland from the north-west ; a middle way, through the middle cities of Germany ; and a route much further south, through Bohemia and Austrian Poland, entering Russia from the south-west. I would have preferred the last, but when Prince Lelewel observed that it was longer than the others by at least two days—while the traversal of Austria meant extra papers for the car and thus still further delay—perceiving how anxious he was to get to Poland quickly I chose, who was given the choosing, the middle route : through Champagne and the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg ; across the older Germanies, the Rhineland, Thuringia, Saxony ; on through Silesia into central Poland.

1st Day.—Our objective was Rheims, which we reckoned to reach late that night.

Now for the first time I saw the fields of France. The road ran along the Marne valley, an evening land that seemed to belong to history no more but only to eventlessness and peace ; the valley where but threescore weeks later the tide of the armies turned, and the tide of history with them. At Meaux we saw soldiers, almost the first I had ever seen, save for occasional redcoats or khaki territorials in Jubilee or Mafeking processions. Later we reached the country of the Champagne vines, and soon it was dark. We got to Rheims at midnight.

2nd Day.—I was up betimes. Lelewel kept repeating “ We must get home, we must get home. Don’t you see, it’s like this——,” ever regretting anew, regret I did not share, that we had not travelled by train. By hurricane driving, he

reckoned we could accomplish the whole journey in three or four days. I realised that I should have to do my sightseeing how and when I could, and had ten minutes only in which to stare at the face of the inviolate church, that crowning glory of the brutish Middle Age. We were away early, through the bare impersonal hillsides and valleys of Champagne, a land where the houses huddle together, and an odd cottage or farm is rarely seen. The children by the wayside were handsomer even than the English.

Our speed was wrong and violent. In an hour or two we had reached a land of stacks and furnaces, were skirting Belgium, and had crossed the Luxemburg frontier. As we tore into Luxemburg town, a burst tyre rewarded us. Tyres for a Rolls are an expensive matter, and as Emile, forewarned, insisted on Lelewel buying an extra spare, a big hole was made in the money we had brought for the journey. Luxemburg, a gardened little town, in appearance (I could now define it) French a little, German more, Belgian mainly, struck me as uninteresting.

We took the great road to Mainz, entered Germany, skirted Treves. The country now was prettier, the children plainer : knobbly little girls with straw-coloured pigtailed, and primitive Christmas-card little boys, with square shaven heads. Both girls and boys were uglier and cleaner than the French ones we had seen. And there were three times as many of them ; in which wayside disparity lies the deepest cause, apart from the wrongs she has suffered, of France's antagonism to Germany. Her cradles are emptier ; and now, in the war that has followed the war, a nation of a more proud and puissant civilisation is fighting to retain, or regain, her ancient primacy, fighting Feld-Marschall Birthrate.

Late that evening we reached Simmern, a country town of the Palatinate, and put up at a small inn. " Let's economise, you know, where we can," said Lelewel.

A Prince's ideas of economy were clearly different from mine, for my first Teutonic meal does not stand in memory as starvation fare : sausage, roast goose, sauerkraut ; with beer, here first tasted, ' because ' explains Diary to Conscience, ' the water was not to be recommended.' The fat old innkeeper talked to Lelewel, on me he merely beamed. I

was furious that I knew no German, furious chiefly with my childhood's schools where of languages the dead ones alone were taught, and damnably ; where German or Spanish or Italian would have been blots on the curriculum, where for tasting the great civilisations of to-day a dreary and irregular flirtation with French irregular verbs was our only equipment, where instead we spent eternal terms learning of trade-winds and their movements, St. Paul and his, and grew mighty in rhomboids and parsing, surds and litmus-paper.

" I must learn it " I said, and Lelewel offered to give me my first lesson. " Give me six phrases or words to begin with, that I can learn by heart."

These were the six :

1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Please.
4. Thank you.
5. How much ?
6. Where is the —— ?

3rd Day.—In the early morning I walked round the little town, saw the market-place—how bright and cheery the Germans are !—and the church, with its tombs of the Palatine Princes, getting back to the inn for a breakfast of roast pigeon. We went on eastwards at selfish speed, as gentlemen should, raising firmaments of dust. Cyclists pedalled in the gutters, pedestrians cowered in the hedges.

" Do tell Emile to go slower ; it's wrong."

" No, it's right. It's Germany."

One of our victims, Nature, had her revenge, for the wind gave us soon such sore and streaming eyes that we had to pull up in Mainz to buy cotton-wool to put round our goggles. About noon we reached Frankfort-on-the-Main, had lunch at an hotel which failed, sardanapalanly, to fulfil my notions of economy, and motored round the town, seeing the Römer, the Guildhall, and Frankfort's two proudest birth-houses, Goethe's and Rothschild's ; also the gloomy Dom, where my history-fed imagination caught the flavour of the Holy Roman Empire, and where indeed the Holy Roman Emperors were crowned. After Frankfort, the villages were uglier and the

country drabber ; then pleasanter again, as woods filled the land.

Soon we were riding with forests on either side, pine-forests redolent of Grimm. On the right loomed a castle of woodland fairy tale, embattled, forest-ringed, set on a high hill. This was the Wartburg, which had seen the great days of the Landgraves of Thuringia, whose count was the first count of the Germanies, where Tannhäuser triumphed before the king, and where an ill-favoured monk, one Junker George (or Martin Luther), wrestled with God and his immortal soul and translated Holy Writ into the German tongue. As we were running under the shadow of the castle, the car broke down. Emile coaxed it to crawl along a few yards to the outskirts of a town, where we found a garage and were soon surrounded by half-a-dozen gesticulating mechanics. They spoke no word of French as Emile no word of German. Lelewel interpreted. Emile wrangled scornfully with the Germans. He was certainly handsomer than they, and certainly knew it. How ugly and stupid the Germans are !

The town was Eisenach, where we put up for the night. Here I first tasted black bread. Delicious, this bogey fare with which the Free Trade politicians had scared the British electorate from Protection, this bread which, as an illustrious Union orator at whose name modesty forbids me even to hint had put it, they cast upon the voters.

4th Day.—That morning we traversed a quarter of Germany, riding through the little grand-ducal cities of Thuringia : Gotha, neat and avenued, full of classical little houses, with the neat classical little Friedenstein palace of the nice romantic little Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha set in its midst ; then Erfurt, darker and more real, since fuller of churches, but less dainty and grand ducal ; then Weimar, smaller again, more utterly grand-ducal still, with the pleasant little mock-Versailles *Residenzschloss* of the pleasant little Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and the house where Schiller lived, and the house where Goethe lived and did all the things that filled his spacious life : singing, governing, pontificating, flirting. Goethe, the father of Faust ; Faust, who sold his soul to the Devil. I saw no motor cars but ours. Weimar was too genteel

for motor cars. Motor cars were for men from the evil world outside, men who had sold their souls to the Devil.

"Lelewel, do you believe the Faust story ever happened in the real world?"

"It's happening always."

As we were getting back into the car after visiting Schiller's house, an officer passed on the other side of the road. Two children were playing on the kerb, one of them in his path; he cuffed the infant brutally on the head, so that it faltered and fell down. Other countries, other ways. England, I felt, was superior, was more gentle: in England would an officer have dared do that?

Leipzig: crowded, ugly and prosperous. Here and there, when after lunch we walked for an hour about the narrower streets, I caught a faint far smell of the Middle Ages, the Middle Ages of fairs and prentices and guilds. And I should say to any man that I know Leipzig, for these glances at cities are, if not the best, also not the worst way of tasting the flavours of countries and many towns; an hour (oh puny paradox!) may give a truer impression than a year. All afternoon we scorched across dismal Saxony to Dresden.

As we drove through the suburbs of this pleasant town, Lelewel reflected: "We've got little money left, but there are only two days more. By to-morrow night we should be well beyond Breslau, quite near the Russian frontier; on the next day ought to get to Warsaw and home. Apart from that——. So we'll go to a really good hotel here; and the good ones are very good." The Bellevue certainly was.

It was not yet dark, so we looked at the city, stood on the Bruhl Terrace, visited Jesuit churches and the baroque Zwinger, and strolled round the old town, a huddling mass of seventeenth century self-consciousness, a rococo Oxford.

In the hotel that evening, a big regimental fête or military banquet of some sort was taking place. After dinner we sat for an hour in the lounge, which soon filled with officers strolling out repletely from their feast. The colonel—or general, or whatever he was—gave the signal for friendly parleyings with a band of gay ladies who, as though by magic, suddenly appeared from nowhere and mingled with the martial throng: putting his arms around one of the

gayest and bulgiest, drawing her tenderly to a sofa, and laying his cubic clipped head across her breast. Other countries, other ways. England, I felt, was superior, was less gentle : in England would an officer have dared do that ?

The only bedroom available was a large double one, which Lelewel and I shared. I lay on the sofa reading while Lelewel got into bed. We talked about Paris, and our three days' run thence. I was full of enthusiasm for the new sights and impressions, and recreated garrulously the cinematographical visions that had flitted across my eyes and brain in the twelve days—twelve centuries ?—since I had left England.

"And we've had such wonderful luck, and such wonderful weather," I gushed. The Polish magnet that was drawing the Rolls-Royce eastwards was for a moment on the uttermost fringe of thought.

"Yes," said Lelewel, "but it won't last. In a little while our luck will change."

"Why ?"

"I don't know. But in a little while. Almost at once."

I got up from the sofa to write a few picture postcards at the writing-table, the back part of which consisted of an upright mirror. Being short-sighted, and finding the light, which was in the ceiling in the middle of the room, too far away, I pulled the table out away from the wall.

Now that grievous mirror was in no way attached to the table, but merely supported by the wall. It crashed on to the floor and split into a thousand fragments.

Lelewel jumped out of bed. "That's the beginning," he said.

I eluded his meaning. "I'm most dreadfully sorry. I pay for it, of course."

"Idiot ! I'm only thinking of the ill-fortune it's brought. Of course you don't pay for it. Neither do I. We pick up the bits and hide them."

"Ought we to ?"

"Anywhere else, no. But here we are not in a civilised country. We are in Germany."

"What rot ! To push a prejudice to so farcical a conclusion. Hating by nations is daft. I don't understand."

"You wouldn't. You're English. England has never been

torn in pieces, dismembered. Your patriotism is a proud and easy thing, bound up with notions of empire, of eternal victories, and of no sufferings or invasions at all. It is a patriotism of success. In Poland we have no country of our own. Try to think what you would feel like if the French and Germans and Spaniards had divided up England between them. Try to think how you would love them. Try, I beg you ; then you'll begin to start to get the meaning of continental history into your head. Our patriotism is a patriotism of failure : of sorrow, suffering and hate. Come along, let's pick up the bits."

With clothes-brush and improvised newspaper shovels, we swept up the glittering mess, and stuffed packages containing the bits behind one of the beds.

" They'll not find it," said Lelewel. " To-morrow morning one of us will stay in the bedroom until the last moment before we leave, and then we'll fly."

" I had hoped to see the art gallery," I said courageously.

" Well, you can have an hour. It probably opens at ten, and we could put off leaving until eleven. But you must be back at the hotel by a quarter to eleven ; I will stay here in the bedroom until then. Then, while I go down and pay the bill, you must stay up here till we're off. That'll only give the maids two minutes in which to pry. The chances are a hundred to one against their noticing that the mirror is missing and catching us in time."

5th Day.—Unfortunately I overslept myself, and did not reach the Royal Gallery until nearly half-past ten. Thus I had twenty minutes in which to visit one of the chief picture galleries of the world, time only to scurry through the Empyrean from one to the other of Baedeker's three or four double-stars. I hastened through many rooms, noticing Hobbema's Water-Mill and a Velasquez Old Man, to the little nook (Compartment A) where the Mother of Heaven of San Sisto reigns in glory alone. It was early, and there were few people in the gallery ; in this room one other person only, a lady.

" Gee, that's fine !"—she turned to me as to an old friend—" Just listen." She thumbed her Baedeker, and in most ethereal of other-world twangs read out :

" " The radiant magnificence of Raphael's Sistine Madonna,

in which the most tender beauty ' "—here she snatched a brief yearn at the picture, and ticked the book with a pencil, which she moistened with her lips—" ' is coupled with the fairness of the mysterious face ' " (fleet glance and tick) " ' will forcibly strike every susceptible beholder, and the longer he gazes, the more enthusiastic will be his delight.' " She looked up and yearned again, quickly turned over a few pages, and finding another relevant rhapsody, resumed :

" ' Room A. 93 *Raphael* Madonna di San Sisto. The composition most resembles that of the Madonna di Foligno. A curtain has just been drawn back and the Virgin issues as it were from the depth of heaven, awe-inspiring, solemn, serene, her large eyes embracing the world in their gaze.' Gee ! "

As now she yearned in my direction I ran, for my Love her fellow-countrywoman beckoned me away, and time was short.

At the hotel door Emile was already waiting with the car. He winked, knowing our little plot. I mounted guard in the bedroom while Lelewel went down to settle the bill. In a few minutes he came back. We glided unobtrusively through the artfully-already-tipped cloud of waiters, and got to the car. Emile needed but a half-minute to start up.

We had reckoned without those chamber-maids, those sporting hundred-to-one chamber-maids who, though the chance was but a hundred to one, had taken it ; and had rushed down into the street to ruin us. Behind them the manager loomed and leered. A sum passed, a sum at which a pre-war imagination boggled. Lelewel cursed the Germans more than ever in his dreamy way. We were nearly penniless now ; still, by hard driving we might reach the Russian frontier to-morrow.

The mirror continued its work. For the first time since I had been on the Continent the sun was hidden, and soon came slashing rain. The country was forbidding. And we had little money. At Görlitz we went into an inn for a cheap meal of ham and beer. The daughter (or wife) of the proprietor, a blowsy flaxen Teuton, came and sat by us, and made advances. To Lelewel she talked endearingly, me she nudged and knee'd. My knowledge of German was still limited, and none of my six phrases much helped me, either in a forward or backward

sense, with the syren ; though another than I might have done something with (5), or even (6). Joseph, I stuck to (1).

Soon after Görlitz, in a dismal countryside, and in a rain-storm, the car, which at this moment was going at perhaps forty miles an hour, crashed, bounced into the air, and came down again with a most comfortless bang. We had struck a *Decauville* railway line connecting two quarries or something of the sort ; of which the rails, instead of being, as they should have been, below the level of the macadam, stood up a full villainous inch. Now we all cursed Germans, the three of us in chorus. Emile spent an hour round and under the car. No one passed us, either to aid or mock. The rain was pitiless, and the bare treeless country. Emile finally decided that the damage, whatever it was, was irremediable.

Lelewel, our German-speaker, had to walk on to the nearest hamlet for help, and, lords of the earth no longer, we trudged like mourners beside our Rolls-Royce as it was ingloriously towed by two black horses to the nearest village, Maltsh by name, where there was a railway station. Here Emile again examined the car, and announced that the "—" was broken : some all-important part of the mechanism of which I forget the French name and have never known the English. Lelewel took a rapid decision. " I *must* get home. We must finish the journey by rail."

Our majestic ride was over.

We found that there was a train from Maltsh that evening which would get us to Breslau before midnight, and a connection on from Breslau to the Russian frontier early next morning. Emile, after much bargaining, was housed with a local farmer, abandoned with the broken car until Lelewel could send him money from Russia to get it on to a train and take it into Breslau for repairs.

Meanwhile, waiting for the train, we went into the dismal inn. Here miners and peasants and their wives and sweet-hearts were dancing. It was Sunday. A tiny wizened old man, skull-faced, was capering about fiddling. He was playing old tunes, near as old as the forests in which they were born. As Lelewel and I entered, furred, drenched, beings obviously from another world, the couples stopped dancing and stared. " Amerikaner," cried some one, and nudged the

old fiddler, who swerved from his ancient melody to the barbaric strains of Hitchy Koo. And lo, the new song had more power over them than the old. In a trice the primeval forests were captured by the needle-guns of King Ragtime. Those who were sitting round peered forward with brighter eyes; the dancing miners clipped the girls more tightly.

Maltsch was about forty kilometres from Breslau; we decided that between us we had enough money for second-class tickets. In the train, while Lelewel dozed, I talked to two greasy-looking brutes who said they were Armenians. One of them kept pushing his face into mine, and spoke of the sufferings of his people; richly deserved, I began to think, generalising in the good old way. We reached Breslau just before midnight. The train for Russia left at four in the morning, and as we had scarcely the time and assuredly not the money for an hotel, we marched up and down the railway station deploring our misadventure.

"I've had worse troubles motoring than this, you know," murmured Lelewel in his Dream. "There was the time I was shot in the neck by brigands in the Sierra de San Pedro in the Estremadura—and the time I ran over a baby near Berne, and the mother said the five hundred francs I offered was too much, as the funeral wouldn't cost half that, and what was one child the less?—and the time on the Spanish-Portuguese frontier they thought I was Dom Manoel returning to win his throne, and the Spanish royalists cheered so hard on one side of the frontier that the Portuguese police arrested me on the other; I can show you the account of it in some Lisbon newspapers I've got at home. Do you like Lisbon? . . ."

We had a sandwich at the station buffet, and then, as the downpour still forbade us the streets, resumed our weary up-and-down.

"It's my turn to amuse you," I said, "shall I say you some English poetry? It will improve your ear"—and, thereby to amuse myself, without more ado declaimed to the mystified Slav Vaughan's 'Retreat' and Swinburne's 'Quia Multum Amavit' from the mystical beginning of one to the end of the mouthable other.

As I paused for breath, Lelewel took his chance, cut in, and

seeing in one of the waiting-rooms protection in human shape, rapped out, "Let us sit down in there."

While he read a French novel, I went to sleep for an hour or two on a bench.

About six in the morning we arrived at Kalisz, the frontier station. The huge brick customs hall was crowded with peasant families from all quarters of Russia: blue-faced emigrants on their way to America and hope. Here also were the officials and Cossacks before whom we had to pass. Here was the entrance-hall to Russia. Shifting pictures marched through my mind; children's prints of snow and wolves and peasants flying in sledges; adolescent visions of the cruel Tsar; more recent pictures of a Dostoeffsky empire where men are both kind and cruel but sane never.

I put my hand into my breast-pocket. My passport was not there. Searched every other pocket; without success. During the journey from Paris I had felt every few hours to make sure that the precious paper was safe and sound; now, for the first time needed, for the first time it failed me. I ransacked my clothes and my bag; in vain. Yet it had been in its place in the Maltsch-Breslau train the night before, when I was talking with that Armenian—that Armenian. And as I felt and fumbled and knew that my passport was gone, much in the policy of Abdul Hamid became clear. Poor misjudged old Sultan; no doubt he had had his reasons. Then at Breslau Lelewel and I had walked about the wet streets for a few minutes, had paced up and down the railway station, had had our sandwich and talked and dozed in buffet and waiting-room; but nowhere had I stood on my head or performed any other passport-endangering act. Lelewel was angry; for the first time I saw his mouth purse up.

What to do? The passport was simply not to be found. Without it I could not get past those officials, those Cossacks. Hastily we found a policy. The only thing for me to do was to go back to Breslau, search everywhere for the paper there, and, if in the end unsuccessful, to stay to get a new one from the British Consulate; Lelewel meanwhile would go on to his home in Poland, thence despatching me money to pay my hotel in Breslau, and my journey on. "But I speak no Ger-

man ; I'm sure I shall never find it," I groaned, " and, anyhow, have we enough money for me to get back to Breslau ? "

Hereabouts it seemed to me that another voice, not Lelewel's or mine, was speaking. It appeared to proceed from one of the soldiers standing by, who was staring, though not unkindly, at my embarrassment. " This is your chance of escape. Take it," I heard the voice say. I peered, but his lips were not moving. What did it mean ? I was muddle-headed, grateful, frightened, pitiful all at once ; was furious at the ill-luck which bade fair to ruin my Polish holiday, was touched by this miraculous intervention to save me therefrom.

Miraculous intervention Number Two : an Englishman, I think a commercial traveller, who had overheard our conversation, broke in. " Excuse me," he said in English, most unfamiliar tongue, " if you don't know where to go in Breslau I can recommend the Hotel du Nord, just opposite the station." So we arranged it. Lelewel added to my German vocabulary :

7. Has a passport been found ?
8. Where is the Lost Property Office ?
9. Where is the British Consulate ?

" I am not angry any longer," he said, " as it can't be helped. Cheer up. Goodbye. In three days at the outside we shall probably see each other again. Wire to Prz—the train you are coming by, and I will come into Warsaw to meet you. How do you say Warsaw in English by the way ? I will send money to the Hotel du Nord."

I was left disconsolate, Russian-less, German-less, wet through, with those Cossacks staring and the emigrants squatted all round, though I put on my monocle and courage. My joy at ' escape ' oozed away. I found I did not want to escape, first because I knew I could not ; second because my fine holiday was being spoiled.

In order to book back to Breslau, or rather to Skalmierzyce, the German frontier station, I found I had to go through into the Russian booking-office. An official let me pass, and I stepped into

HOLY RUSSIA,

where I surprised Lelewel standing in another queue, though booking of course eastwards. He came quickly over, sought

to persuade, and at length persuaded me, now that I was on Russian soil, to take the risk of jumping passportless into the Warsaw train. "You won't be seen. It will be all right. If there were trouble the British Consul at Warsaw would put it right with the Russian authorities. . . ." etc., etc. I agreed reluctantly. Those Cossacks. Siberia—chains—mines—wolves—knouts. Besides, I had already given a man money to buy my ticket to Skalmierzyce; he would be looking for me; unable to find me he would question the officials; then the Warsaw train would be searched, and I should be sent back to Germany, with all chance of my Polish holiday departed—or sent to those mines, those chains, that Terror——

Lelewel did not heed, half dragged me into the Warsaw train. "Huddle back in that corner. The train goes in five minutes. There's no risk. Don't look out of the window." It was a crowded second-class carriage.

Presently every one became excited, and began looking out of the window and exchanging significant glances.

"What is it?" Lelewel did not answer, looked annoyed, evidently did not want me to know what they were chattering about.

"The police believe that certain badly-wanted revolutionaries are on this train," a man explained to me in French, "so the soldiers are searching it."

And, despite all Lelewel's furious remonstrances, I rushed out into the corridor and on to the platform, and only just in time, as soldiers climbed into the waggon a moment after I had left it. I found the man who had bought my ticket, passed back through the customs hall, and got into the German train. It took me five hours in slow trains, and changing twice, to reach Breslau.

In one of these an oily old man harangued me. I buttoned up my overcoat and kept feeling in my hip-pocket to see that my ticket was there. He said he was an Armenian.

CHAPTER VII : BRESLAU

Across the station yard I saw my gold-lettered Hotel du Nord, through whose portals I passed with as much swagger as I could muster. The porter spoke English of sorts. This was the first occasion on which I had had direct financial dealings with foreign hotel gentry. I ordered a room, though in stipulating fearfully that it should be cheap ripped gilt from off my golden manner.

My first thought was food. I was well-nigh famished, as I had had nothing since sparse sandwich in that same city of Breslau at four in the morning. I took my meal in the hotel restaurant. At the end of it, in infamous yet all-too-intelligible French, the waiter asked me to pay.

"Why must I pay?" I said. "I'm staying at the hotel."

"All meals taken in the restaurant are paid separately from the hotel bill," he recited.

It was a tragic moment. I had no money. I had had just enough to pay for my ticket back to Breslau, and my worldly all now consisted of two marks, an English sixpenny piece and a French penny.

"It is the rule of the hotel," went on the recitation. No money. Alone in Europe. What could I do?

I soon comprehended that only one policy was possible, and adopted it. I must look rich and talk disdainfully.

"I shall speak to the manager," I said loftily.

With the latter personage I looked as rich as I possibly could. He gave in, agreeing that the meals should be put on the weekly bill. I breathed, and ate, more freely.

So light-hearted, indeed, did this week's credit make me that I spent one-mark-eighty of my two marks on a Guide to Breslau, a little German phrase-book, and a littler Polish one. Then I set about my business; with the bit of paper on which my new German phrases were scribbled, went a-hunting for my lost passport.

First of all I did the railway station, the buffet, where the seedy waiter remembered me and my seedy sandwich, the waiting-rooms and the platforms. No luck. Next I found my way to the British Consulate. Here I had to deal with a German, whose rank or position in the Consulate I don't know. He informed me, not too politely, that if my passport failed to turn up, I could only get another by telegraphing to England for a copy of my birth certificate, which would have to be despatched to the British Consulate-General at Berlin for the latter to issue me a new passport. I reflected that with my English sixpence and French penny—value then, half a mark or so; value now, 1923, half a billion or so—I had not enough money to telegraph. This British Consular official, this German, felt on the whole that he could not advance me the necessary cash: a young Englishman who said he was motoring across Europe with a Polish prince. Come, come!

A kinder secretary gave me a list of Lost Property Offices in the town. *Fundbüros* he called them. Found-Bureaux, indeed. How different were the English from the Germans. We thought of the unfortunates who had lost things, the Germans of the official institution that found them. Englishmen stressed the individual's rights, Germans the State's rights. Englishmen thought first of the property and rights of free men, Germans of mere bureaucracy. Rule Britannia! God save the King!

I thanked the kinder secretary; though the net result of my visit to His Majesty's representative, German representative, was poor.

As I could not afford tram-fares, I trudged in the rain from one far Fundbüro to another, always with negative result, increasingly despondent at each failure. I got back dead tired to my Hotel du Nord, though here, at least, was a dinner, and a dinner for which I had not (yet) to pay. When would Lelewel send the money? Should I have to live here for ever, or rather for a week? At the end of a week there would be the bill. As a sop to the Possible Worst, I ate less.

2nd Day.—Weary tour of the police stations. At one of these, where no one of course spoke any English, to help me

they sent out and fetched from a neighbouring slum a fat common old woman, who at once overwhelmed me with a flood of friendliest cockney. She had lived in London for years, Brixton, a washerwoman, had done well, her daughter had married an English soldier, a corporal too, they were at Gibraltar now, how she had loved London, how she loved the English, what could she do for me? I thought her beautiful. When I had told her my story, and named all the likely and unlikely places where the passport might have been lost, she translated what I had said to the German policemen who, for all their shining *pickelhauben*, were much less fierce than they appeared. They promised full enquiries. Then my new friend took me along to her house, a kind of cookshop in a back street, where she set before me a meal of heavenly onions and tripe celestial.

"Mother" I said, "I have no money."

"Never mind that. The English were always the kindest people in the world to me, so who's going to stop me giving you a bit of tripe?"

Who?

Who should force her to hunger-blockade me—who?

She accompanied me to the railway station, where her efforts, though more efficient than mine, were no more fruitful. We parted dear friends.

I changed my English sixpence and spent fivepence of it on another German phrase-book. After mooning about the wet streets, I went back to my hotel, where at least I had a bed, debtor's bed, to sleep in. Cash in hand: twenty pfennigs, or twopence.

3rd Day.—Next morning, with foolish dourness, I began anew my round of Fundbüros and police stations. Fruitless. Returned to my bedroom to mope. Lelewel was not real; he would never send the money. If he did, it would be too late; I should be turned out of the hotel. The copy of the birth certificate would never be sent; I had no money to telegraph; if I had, to whom in England should I telegraph? To my native town I supposed, to Barnstaple. But to whom at Barnstaple. To the Registrar? Or was a Registrar only for weddings? And how could I telegraph? Could one

telegraph in English, or would it have to be in German? I searched in phrase-book. Every phrase appeared four times: in English, in German, in a horrid hotch-potch labelled phonetic pronunciation, and in a literal, most literal, translation:

Give me a telegraph form, please.

Bitte, geben Sie mir ein Telegrammformular.

Bittu—gaeb'n—zee meerr—ine Telegraamformmoolarr.

Give me, (I) beg, a telegram form.

What was it all about? What a difficult position I was in! Perhaps, though, it would be a good thing if I never got to Prz——. For there, foretokened, was terror. Except that Prz—— was further from the Line than Breslau. Breslau was nearer. Breslau was the place! *When* would Lelewel send the money?

After lunch I went to see my cookshop friend, who alone, it seemed, in this town of five hundred thousand souls, spoke English. I told her grandiloquently of the breakdown of my mighty car, meanly reckoning that with a prospect of golden returns she would be of even surer service. My passport seemed lost beyond recall; hope lay only in a new one, telegraph-money wherefor was an urgent need. I moistened my lips and ushered in the topic of a small loan.

"Come along with me," she said, and led me to a better part of the town, rang the bell of a comfortable middle-class house, and introduced me to her landlord, Herr G., a paper-hanger and decorator by trade. The old lady explained my sad case, and—such is the slyness of the Hun—Herr G. at once asked me to dinner, which I thus had, for the first time in my life, with a German family. There was a friendly wife, a niece, the niece's husband (a Frenchman naturalised German, the only one of this species I have known, who inveighed with convert's zeal against the Froggies), and a son, aged eighteen, who spoke excellent French and English, though he had never stepped outside his native province. This boy saw me home to my hotel, and (4th Day) next morning gave me—such was the artful pre-war propaganda of the Boche—the money for, and wrote and despatched, two telegrams: one in French to Lelewel, a pathetic S.O.S.—"Send 300 marks immediately STOP. In desperate position STOP. Lee Hotel du Nord

Breslau"—and the other in English to the Registrar of my native town, asking that a sworn record of the first, and most fateful, event of my life should be communicated to His Majesty's representative at the court of the German Emperor.

Reflected on the instability of human affairs. Three days ago we were lords of the earth in our Europe-treading Rolls-Royce. Now here was I, a stranded penniless waif, and poor Emile, of whom I sometimes thought—we think sometimes of others—in that awful hole at Maltsch.

5th Day.—For the first time, since at Dresden in both actual and barometric sense the glass had fallen, I beheld the sun. Young G. took me to see the Centenary Exhibition, the event of the Breslau year, which celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the Battle of the Nations, the liberation of Germany, the driving of Napoleon from the Fatherland. Here was much pomp. Unfortunately, my time in Breslau came midway between the two chief ceremonies which marked the exhibition: its opening a few weeks earlier by the Crown Prince—though I studied this in back numbers of the illustrated papers in the hotel reading-room, which portrayed for posterity the half foolish half criminal face of the heir to the Imperial Throne, grinning under the top-heavy headgear of the Death's Head Hussars, skull and cross bones and death; his dowdy wife; flexile mayors and cringing councillors, officers and officials, everywhere soldiers, plumes shivering in the air—and the visit a few weeks later of the All-Highest Himself, which I saw depicted for the first time yesterday in an old number of the *Illustrierte Zeitung*, old by ten years, though it might well be ten thousand: parades, feathers, swords; obsequious shorn heads and much vainglory.

I am not concerned with politics, but it might be no bad corrective for our English extremists, who have been carried on the pendulum swing of hate from the anti-German rabies of the war-period to the anti-French rabies that is the fashion of the hour, to turn over at random a few score pages of any German illustrated paper of the years before the War. I have tried it with several. A few reproductions of pictures or furniture or architecture; an occasional portrait of a scientist or sculptor or Herr Professor; but on some four pages out of

five—in a proportion varying from twofold to tenfold the proportion shown by the similar British, French, Italian, Swiss, Spanish and North and South American illustrateds through which, for dear statistics' sake, not politics', I have scurried—cannon, aeroplanes, warships, fortresses, generals, and, here there and everywhere, in thousand poses and posturings, the shape and symbol that gave them meaning, a stumpy Mannequin with upturned moustaches and ever-changing helmets, now on board ship, now greeting a fellow or subject king, now at manœuvres, now at some pompous *Parade*.

And indeed this show that celebrated a war long past smelt of wars to come. For the first time the idea entered my Radical head. Suppose Lelewel was right, and that Oxford tutor for whom the be-all and end-all of life was the O.T.C.? And those jingo newspapers in England? Suppose there was something in it: Lord Roberts and all that.

The exhibition was smaller than the other two I had seen, the Glasgow of 1901 and the Franco-British of 1908. In style and setting I thought it superior: the great park in which it was built, the woods and trees, the lake, the immense Festhalle with blue dome. And more significant; for whereas the other two had been mere fairs, with the two objects of a fair, trade and fun, samples and merry-go-rounds, bread and circuses, this Breslau show was a symbol and a shadow: symbol of a war that had been won, shadow of a war to win. What were those words of Lelewel's—'An army of ghosts that creeps forward to give battle, another army that——' For an instant I saw them.

Oh peaceful Germany! pacific names!—Centenary of the Battle of the Nations Hall, Victory Hall, Triumphal Way. The first building we entered was filled with pictures of battles only, the next with portraits only of generals and soldier-kings. What soldier-kings! Dear Frederick William III. of Prussia, shrinking from his own uniform, remembering perhaps the past, those glorious flights after Jena and Auerstadt; Tsar Alexander I., with his selfish and romantic face; Emperor Francis of Austria, sickly, monkish and stupid. Next a building devoted entirely to that most peaceful of all peaceful kindreds, the Prussian Royal Family. Then to a hall filled with memories of Napoleon's wars and battles; bad pictures

shewing how bad other people's wars always are. One gallery consisted of a graded series showing how Bonaparte's whole career led, inevitably, to Waterloo. We saw Blucher's sword, that had achieved the victory of Right and Justice ; gaped at the cab in which, after that victory, the Emperor had fled from Waterloo ; sentimentalised, in a sad little alcove apart, over the golden cradle of the little King of Rome, Eaglet of Reichstadt, tubercular Bonaparte the Second, who never was to reign. The sins of the fathers——

But the hall I remember best, for here it was that young G. became fervid, was the Colonial Building. On the wall opposite you as you entered was a gigantic map in bright colours of that portion of the Congo country which, following upon recent international negotiations, Monsieur Joseph Caillaux had transferred to Germany. The rights and wrongs of that cession are not our concern, nor indeed are Frenchmen agreed thereon ; what is certain is that Imperial Germany was glorying most headily for that France had, at a mere gesture of her arm, ceded a great tract of her African Empire. " We have but to speak ! " cried young G., his dreamy gentle face flushing with a brutal elation, hardening before my eyes, literally, into the skulled sergeant visage of caricature : " One day all the French colonies will be ours ! "

Now that I had wired, for contrariness' sake I renewed and redoubled my energies to find my lost passport, though while waiting for the arrival of the papers from England I gave the British Consul's secretary, kinder secretary, the requisite details for Berlin. In so doing I came up against a difficulty. That German brute came in to complicate it.

" What is your religion ? "

" Protestant."

" What branch of Protestantism ? "

" Oh," casually, " a small sect you would hardly have heard of."

This struck him as shifty. " It is a most important point," he said, " in the case of a passport for Russia. You must give the name of the denomination into which you were baptized."

" I never was baptized."

" Ha ! ha ! "

"The sect my people belong to——"

"What sect?" he sneered, and dragged my precious secret from me.

"Plymouth Brethren then," off-handedly, as though it did not matter. "The Brethren do not practise infant baptism."

"Perhaps. Is there perhaps another little infant rite they *do* practise, a certain Biblical rite?"

"I'm not a Jew, if that's what you're trying to insinuate."

"My dear good sir, who ever said you were!" But he peered riggishly. True, my face was Gentile enough, but perhaps I had false nose, false lips

That evening, though too soon for it to be in response to my wire to Lelewel, a kind of agent or gamekeeper of his turned up at the hotel, bearing bundles of money, some for me, and some for the rescue of Emile and the car at Maltsch. My English-speaking porter was not to be found, and so I, Englishman speaking in French to the Italian waiter, who spoke in Italian to a German waiter, who spoke in German to a Polish waiter, who spoke in Polish to Lelewel's man, gave the latter my news and told him to inform his master that so soon as I could procure my passport I would set my face to the east.

6th Day.—My pockets were now full, and I endeavoured to start repayment of kindnesses. Young G. refused to take money for the telegrams, though his family allowed me to be their host at the Schweidnitzer Keller under the Town Hall, that has been restaurant since the year of our Lord 1230. Here we supped off sauerkraut and roast goose and pancakes. Here for two hours we fed where they had been feeding for near seven hundred years.

After supper I went back to the hotel and there discovered Emile, who had been in Breslau since noon hunting for me. He had thus missed Lelewel's man, who had set out for Maltsch in the morning. Emile told of a Franco-German war. He and the farmer had come to blows, the farmer had turned him out of the house, forced him to sleep in a barn, and refused to give him anything to eat. For two days he had only eaten what he had been able to steal in the village.

"Oh, these dirty Germans, these pigs of Germans!" he

said, spitting. Boche was the word he wanted, but suffering and hate had not yet invented it. The German women, he admitted, were not so bad as the men. Indeed, it was 'une dame' who had given him the money for his fare to Breslau. He was cheered when I told him his rescue was at hand, and that Lelewel's man had gone on to Maltsch to find him. "I mustn't miss him though," and after a visit to a beer shop I saw him off at the railway station back to Maltsch.

Later that evening I visited my cookshop lady, for whom I had prepared a little surprise in the shape of two golden coins. These she flatly refused to accept. When I pressed and pressed, pressed as one does when one means the money to be taken, she became indignant. "I won't!" she cried. "I didn't help you to get money out of you. I love the English."

There were tears in her eyes; after all, it was 1913.

7th Day.—Now that I had pence in my pocket, I 'did' the town thoroughly, riding too in tram-cars, like the swells. The town, well churched, and half Polish half German in feeling, held a fair measure of interest. I moved amongst the crowds, and plastered them with adjectives. They were ugly, manly, hard-faced, sentimental, ingenuous, cute, friendly, swinish, prosperous, pushing, prolific. . . . I find a dull little dissertation in my journal on 'Features Noted,' four serial phrases which I will copy, to compare them with other four:

The children are the fattest that ever I saw.

How these Germans eat!

Clothing gaudier and gayer than in England.

Sleekest fleshiest mob of humans in the world.

Thus that day I unrevealingly wrote. To-day, one decade later, in touching on the same four subjects, I had best opened my Bible and transcribed from the Lamentations:

The young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them.

They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets.

They that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.

Their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered; it is become like a stick.

But Germany when I wrote, unlike Jerusalem when mourned the son of Hilkiah, had not accomplished her iniquity, and in the restaurant that lunch-time calling 'Where is corn and wine?' I called not vainly.

After lunch I went round to the British Consulate. The title and patent of my salvation had arrived that day from Berlin. The German official handed it to me with a sinister courtesy that set me plaguing and puzzling. What was he up to? What did he know? Did he know that this parchment enabled me to cross the frontier of hell?

Once again I played for an instant with a plan of immediate flight back to England; pretended, to save my face with Whoever was playing with me, nicely to weigh the pros and cons in absolute liberty, rattled my chains braggartly to show they could not hinder my running back to England if I would—and ran instead to the Russian Consul's to get his visa. After a two hours' wait, he consented to see me.

"Religion?" he queried. This then was the German's little joke. "Protestant faith, that's very vague. What branch of the Protestant faith? Come! I can give no visa without a straight answer." Was Fate hindering—helping—me once again?

I tried "Frères de Pleemout" in French, and "Gebrüder von Pleemout" in German. Such verbal criminality seemed only to confirm his worst suspicions. What secret society, what nihilist club, what ghetto gang was this?

"You are a Jew," he cried, and lurched—

Within the hour I was through with my difficulties and my packing, had said goodbye to my Breslau friends, and had paid my bill in such princely fashion and with such princely tips that I was reduced again to poverty, and had to book lowly third-class to Kalisz.

CHAPTER VIII : ACROSS EUROPE— THIRD-CLASS CARRIAGE

During the first part of the journey from Breslau to Kalisz I was alone with a young man, in appearance a countryman. Learning that I was English, he became all eagerness to instil into me proper views on the political situation in that part of Germany through which we were travelling. We spoke in execrable French. He himself, he told me, though a German subject, was a Pole. The majority of the population in the eastern marches of Germany was Polish ; but the Poles were oppressed by the Prussian Government ; thousands were expelled, while those who remained were cruelly persecuted. Their language was proscribed ; children had been whipped for saying their prayers to God in the Polish language. Hate of the Germans was the deepest sentiment in the heart of every Pole ; the noblest sentiment too. The Germans were cruel beasts.

I was impressed, almost persuaded. What the young Pole said, and he said a great deal more than I have noted, and said it more effectively, fitted in with much of the little I had read on this question.

At Ostrowo he got out. Another young man replaced him, a clerk perhaps. Learning that I was English, he became all eagerness to instil into me proper views on the political situation in that part of Germany through which we were travelling. He spoke in execrable English. He himself, he told me, though a German, did not find this part of Germany very agreeable to live in, as it was infested with Poles, who were a shiftless and contemptible race, a dissipated gang of ne'er-do-wells, stirred up by factious priests and paid agitators to make trouble and interfere with the everyday work of plain men. They were fine talkers, much finer than the Germans ; but if ever, as they traitorously hoped, they were to get control, in five years the province would go to rack and ruin and fall into

the state of Portugal or Turkey. The Poles were vicious, flashy and idle. The Germans stood for order, hard work and civilisation.

All this fitted in with much that historians had told me.

What is truth ?

We arrived in Kalisz at five in the afternoon. In the Customs Hall I was spotted by the soldier whose mouth, a week before, had seemed to move ; now at any rate his left eye, his this-world left eye, moved in a wink of recognition. The official who opened my bag pretended to peruse, appraise, approve each book he discovered therein : phrase-books, dictionaries, Guide to Breslau, Baedeker, Fyffe's History of Europe, and a French novel.

There was no train until next morning, so I had to spend the night at Kalisz. I took a droshky, as the town, which I found to be a seedy-looking place, was some way from the station. Being poor, I told the driver to draw up at a miserable little hotel, whose name however was pompous, Europe-shaking, though I dare not write it for fear of a libel action. Save only a certain inn in a Cornish mining village, whose name I withhold for the same reason, it was the illest place I ever stopped at. Tea—or supper, for by any other name it would have smelt as vile—was so different a meal from, say, Mrs. Y.'s garden banquet, that for all my self-conscious hatred of luxury I would have chosen the latter, and once again let the starving families go hang. The tea was so full of tannin that when I tilted the cup a few minutes after having filled it, it was adorned with a brilliant brick-red ring ; the bread was mouldy, the water (which I called for to replace the tea) putrid, the ham malodorous. I strolled out into the town, bought chocolate to stay my hunger, and at a street-corner ran across Emile and Lelewel's man ! They had arrived from Maltsch the same day. We walked round the town together, visiting the two Polish churches, the blatant blue-domed Orthodox cathedral, and the column celebrating that treaty which was signed here between Tsar Alexander and the Prussians, and which was the beginning of Napoleon's end.

Emile was communicative and told me his life-story. His grandfather had died for the Commune on the barricades ; his father, a poor forester, an anarchist, had died for Liberty,

Equality, Fraternity in one of the dungeons of the Republic ; his mother had died, that the race on this earth might continue, in childbed. A vagabond for fourteen years, he had begged and thieved, until put to work at a garage by a friend of his grandfather's. He had been a chauffeur for five years now ; first for a French cocotte, who was kept by an Austrian banker Jew, with whom he had motored the length and breadth of France, Germany, Austria, England and Scotland ; then with an Argentine millionaire, with whom he had toured Spain, France, the La Plata and Egypt, and now with ' Monsieur le Prince ' (Lelewel), who was the only decent one of the three. The rich, he knew them. All the revolutions so far had merely put plutocratic republics, or parliaments of rich men, in the stead of kings. Republics and parliaments, what good were they, what wrongs had they redressed ? Had they reduced misery, or starvation, or injustice ? The real revolution was coming, was coming soon, and then the rich would see. In Buenos Ayres his Argentine employer, when dining in the luxury restaurants of the city, had loved to sit at a table by a window that looked on to the street, and would order the waiters, if it were night-time, to pull up the blinds, so that the poor outside might envy the fare he was gobbling down. His cocotte employer had been no better. She fed her spaniel on pâté-de-foie-gras and starved her servants to skeletons. This mucky spaniel Emile and a housemaid had murdered, and after thrashing the Austrian Jew, Emile had left. One day the rich would see.

(What is truth ?)

I got back to my ' hotel.' In the passage a brawl was in progress ; I slipped past it and up the stairs to my bedroom. The bed, which had four wooden walls, like a closed cubicle, had to be climbed into by a little door in one side. In this prison-bed I cowered, as horrible shrieks and struggles came nearer and nearer, up the stairs and along the corridor outside. I climbed fearfully out, to find there was no lock to the bedroom door ; tilted a chair against it with the chair-back under the handle, put on my gallant knuckle-duster, climbed back into bed, and said my prayers. Soon they were answered, for the cry of the victim rose to a piercing shriek, then sank to a moan and stopped. Death presumably.

Next morning I took a cab to the station. The road passed through fields and an unbuilt waste. In the middle of this waste the cabby stopped, produced from his pocket a gold five rouble piece (half a guinea), and made it clear to me by signs and grimaces that if I did not at once hand over a sum equal to the sum displayed, I should stay in that desolate place for ever. I did not know the way to the station. I had a heavy bag. I had no language in which to curse or wheedle. These facts my driver knew as well as I did, had indeed weighed them, based his whole policy upon them. He folded his arms to await my inevitable surrender, from time to time turning round to display, for emulation, the piece of gold.

Something must be done. I undid my bag, and got out the English-Polish phrase-book I had bought in Breslau. My first perusal of it had given me the impression that it was a trifle too academic for my probable needs. None the less, I turned hopefully now to 'Wyrażenia Potoczne' or 'Everyday Phrases.' What did I find? :

'He would not give the sick person absolution—I esteem, value, appraise the prebendary highly—The reaping-girl reaps—She struck his eyes (bewitched, enamoured him)—Home is home, though it be ever so homely—I know not where it sticks—The Pyrenees divide France from Spain—John, change the plates!—He (she) runs riot—He (she) is a relaxed Papist—I hear, Miss N., that Mr. S. has obtained your hand : felicitations!—He listens, he lurks—Miss M. sang a duet with Mr. N. who is an excellent tenorist, her melodious modulations and flourishings (flights and shakes) are enchanting—The woman falls off—Are you divorced from bed and board?—God forbid!'

I hated the compiler of that feculent publication more savagely far than the offending cabby, flung it back into my bag and snatched at the French-Polish phrase-book 'Le Français en Pologne,' which I remembered as chattier. Maybe. Yet the author of that spirited work also did not seem to have quite provided for my case. I turned feverishly over the pages, scanned the untimely headings: 'Formules de Politesse'—No, that was not what I wanted. 'La Traversée en Mer'—my case was direr than sea-sickness. 'Le Coiffeur de Dames'; 'Hors d'œuvre'; At the Theatre; Parts of the

Body ; Lady's Underclothing. . . . None of these tallied precisely with my need.

At last I came upon a page headed 'En Voiture,' and the hopeful phrase 'Allez tout droit !' 'Proszę jechać wolno !' This I repeated once, twice, thrice ; menacingly. But with no result. Jehu leered, knew he was winning.

Then, as God sometimes helps those who help themselves, He helped me. I at once put the heaven-inspired idea into execution, got out my new English-Polish dictionary, and, looking out the words one by one, prepared the phrase, "I have the evil eye." (I have since learnt to my annoyance that in Poland one speaks rather of 'the evil mouth,' so that it was not really the wording of my laboured curse that secured victory.) Then out of my pocket I took my passport, Barnstaple-Berlin passport, immense, parchmenty, and began sing-singing aloud : "We, Edward Goschen . . . Ambassador Plenipotentiary . . . at the Court of His Imperial Majesty the German Emperor, King of Prussia, etc., etc.—Request and Require . . .," repeating "I have the evil eye" at the end of every line, and pointing, and staring at my oppressor.

This performance took effect. Cabby crossed himself, whipped furiously his horse, and in a few minutes we were at the station. I gave him his legal fare, plus a generous tip for all the fun we had had together. He crossed himself, but took the money.

The Warsaw train was full. In my compartment there were two Polish peasants, two Russian soldiers, a cringing old Jew in a black smock, a seedy sort of clerk who reeked of garlic, and two women who looked like bedraggled birds, as women on long railway journeys have a habit of doing. Every one was eating.

As soon as the train started, the two soldiers began jeering at the Jew ; what they said I know not at all, and know completely. They were doing what Christian soldiers are fond of doing when they find a Jew helpless and alone ; insulting him and his race. Israel shrugged his shoulders and smiled ingratiatingly. One of the soldiers flung himself upon him and wrenched his lips apart ; the other stuffed a slice of ham from a sandwich into his mouth. The wretch could not

resist, but swallow he would not : Leviticus xi. 7 is older than the oldest laws of our mushroom civilisation, or the mushroom civilisations of Greece and Rome. The bright beady eyes, which I could just see above the soldier's paw, gleamed with hate, and a pride which has mocked at fleeting empires, and will mock.

Onward Christian Soldiers ! Slice after slice of ham they stuffed into the ever more bulging mouth, until they found they needed the butt-end of a whip to force it down.

I felt miserable enough, was furious with the brutes, was entirely for Israel. Was sorry too for myself, ashamed of my Pilate, if not Gallio, part ; but " You have no word of Russian, and if you had you would only enrage them more," quieted King Conscience down. What was queerest was the attitude of the Poles—the peasants, the clerk, the women—who stared with the utter impartiality of even hate as the detested Russians ill-treated the detested Jew.

Abruptly, and without apparent reason, the soldiers tired of their sport, and left the victim, with bulging cheeks, alone ; who, when a few minutes later they got out at a wayside station, waited patiently until the train had started again, then leant out of the window and got rid of the forbidden filth, wiping his mouth with a bit of black rag, shuddering lest his fingers should be tainted. ' Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch ; they are unclean to you.'

We were travelling through flat well-cultivated country. Near Lodz it became industrial, and almost as ugly, while less picturesquely ugly, than the Black Country of England. We reached Warsaw in the early evening. Lelewel was waiting for me on the platform. I was overjoyed at seeing him, and he too seemed pleased.

" It's good of you to have come all the way back to Warsaw to meet me," I said, supposing that he had already passed a week at Prz——.

" I haven't been home yet," he explained. " I was anxious to, but have had a lot of business to transact in Warsaw, and then, and then—I thought I would put it off until you came, until——"

We did not stay in the capital, but took the next train on to our destination ; with a first-class carriage now for the final stage of our journey.

The interlude was over, the adventure was beginning.

CHAPTER IX : HATE CASTLE

In the train Lelewel spoke to me for the first time of his family ; of a grandmother, of whom he spoke with reverence, a sister with affection, a mother I thought with shame. All his talk was timid, apologetic ; each mile he became less and less the worldly-wise prince escorting humble dependant from city to city, from scene to scene, more and more the little schoolboy, fearful of the impression his ' people ' might make on scorners in the upper school.

We got out at the village station of G——. An old fashioned carriage awaited us, and a coachman in blue, who bowed to the ground and kissed his prince's hands. We were in the middle ages now, in a feudal land.

We drove through several villages, each with one long street of one-storied cottages, primitive but not sordid. Peasants and womenfolk and children ducked and bobbed.

All around stretched wheat-fields and forests, fading drearily away into a grey sky. At lonely places we passed sometimes gaunt wooden crosses : " Graves " said Lelewel, " Men who have been buried by the roadside," and doffed his hat and crossed himself ; also did I.

After a two hours' drive, we reached the gates of the chateau. A crowd of men, women and children ran forward to greet us ; there was much hand-kissing. Lelewel seemed to love them, and to be loved. We passed through the gates into a kind of park : no park such as enshrines an English mansion, place of trim lawns and immemorial oaks, but a wild domain, shrouded by walls and hedges from the surrounding forests and wheat-fields.

The gates clanged behind us ; I was shut off now from the world.

We passed a dark lake, meadows, copses. Trees and bushes had an unfamiliar appearance, and, for all the day was

sultry, wore a winter air ; as though there was still hoar frost on the leaves. I felt suddenly cold.

The house came into sight, a low Greco-French building, constructed largely of wood, and painted white ; behind, not eminent from the main approach, were portions of a much older, turreted building, the 'chateau' of the Englishman's imagination.

As our carriage drew up at the portico, a young woman and two young men came forward. The former greeted Lelewel adoringly, and covered his face with kisses. She was clearly his sister, having the same turned-up nose, flaxen hair and stately bearing. But she was smaller ; her eyes, though of the same dreamy blue, were saner ; she was at once less sophisticated and more sensible.

Of the two young men, one, wearing gaiters, countrified suit and wide-brimmed Bismarck hat, had the appearance of a gentleman farmer ; stocky, solid and (so I misjudged him) dull. The other, rather older, with girlish vainglorious face, absurdly dressed for the country in a tight-waisted suit, was a powdered simpering fop, who flapped his hands amain. Lelewel greeted him less warmly than the other.

I was introduced : " My sister Weronika, my cousin Count Sebastyan Lelewel " (the fop), " my friend Count Karol Morawski " (the gentleman farmer). Mademoiselle Weronika and Count Morawski greeted me in French, Sebastyan in good, but outrageously affected, English. As he spoke, he swayed from side to side with vanity, saying to me in contortions as clear as words : " Admire my beautiful English, admire my beautiful English."

Lelewel ran forward to embrace an old woman sitting in an armchair on the balcony, with a diminutive *dame de compagnie* by her side. She had a big white bonnet on her head ; was the sallowest and most wrinkled old creature I had ever seen ; with her big nose and gleaming eyes looked Grandmother Wolf of Little Red Riding Hood.

" My English friend, Monsieur Lee ; my grandmother, the Countess Ostowska." I shook the proffered paw.

" Look," whispered Lelewel proudly in my ear, " she is ninety nine years of age."

We went indoors. Lelewel led me across a wide hall which

gave an impression at one and the same time old and feudal, and modern and Paris-furnished, up a luxurious altogether-Paris staircase, and then—suddenly, at the top, in one step striding across four centuries—along bare stone-paved passages into a far corner of the old wing, where a small suite had been set apart for me: bedroom, sitting-room and bathroom. The stone floors were covered with rugs, the walls were bare and whitewashed, as in a monastery. The bathroom, however, was spick and span, and as twentieth-century as bathrooms need be.

A young peasant woman was sweeping the bedroom floor. Her feet were bare, and she had an orange kerchief on her head. "She will be your servant" said Lelewel, "ask her for whatever you want."

"Thank you, I will: that is, as far as my twenty words of Polish will allow me to."

"Now I must leave you" said Lelewel nervously, slinking, not prancing, away: "Come downstairs in about twenty minutes for your meal. I must see my mother first."

Mademoiselle Weronika, who was waiting for me down in the hall, took me into the dining-room, an immense apartment with a stone floor and great windows that looked out on to the park. Two places were set; it was well on into the afternoon and the others had already dined.

Soon Lelewel came in; he was transformed; looked pale and tortured. Someone had been sucking at his heart.

He said something to his sister in Polish, adding to me in French: "My mother cannot see me; she is not well."

He went on talking to his sister. I ate and watched.

About half-way through the meal began a noise of footsteps and talking on the stairs outside, coming lower, moving nearer, getting louder: a chattering and a clattering and a hustling. Then appeared, through the curtains that separated the dining-room from the hall, a most singular trio, walking abreast, shuffling, processioning forward: in the middle a towering gaunt *grande dame*, a woman of angles, points and corners, with all the makings of a hag, though not quite old enough for hagdom, rather a hag-to-be, powdered and patched, wearing a golden wig, attired in a musty black lace robe, pre-

tentiously old-fashioned, with crinoline ; on her left Grimalkin, a cat-faced wizened whiskered little woman dressed in tightest black, who came barely up to her shoulder ; on her right, a good head shorter again—a dwarf.

My heart beat fast, and as I stared and saw, the fear, the madness, of which in earliest days I had had good measure, knowing as a child the terror of God and this world and of my own soul which returned in fleeting moments to the world wherefrom it came ; that madness, lulled by happier youth-time and easeful Oxford days, fanned again to a trembling flame within me by evenings in mid England (a flame to which even Czelten's daft drainpipe escapade had been fuel), burned down into each cranny of my limbs and heart, consumed my flesh within me, left only emptiness—and flame. I was Folly ; I was Faint-Heart ; I was Funk. "Walk in, oh Trinity" I whispered to these old-new friends, and as I spoke the trinity of humans continued to walk in.

The aristocratic old harridan waved away Lelewel's attempted embraces—for he had sprung up from the table to greet her and was striving to place a filial kiss on cheek or hand—but allowed him to introduce me vaguely to the still advancing trio : "My honoured mother, the Generaless Tanska ; my half-sister, the Canoness Klementyna ; *Monsieur Zwan*."

The trio bowed, bending forward in unison. I met the two women's eyes ; the dwarf's I would not.

"Happy to meet you" I murmured.

"Don't touch me !" cried the Generaless, as Lelewel again attempted to place a kiss, and with high forfending hands she plumped herself down on a sofa ; Grimalkin plumping herself down on her left, Monsieur Zwan on her right. Fixing Lelewel with her gleaming eyes, in a shrill voice midway between whimper and nag she delivered herself of long-prepared harangue :

"Keep away, keep away ! It's beautiful to want to kiss me now, it's a cheap and easy way of trying to put yourself in the right, after basely deserting me all these months, gadding about western Europe—Rome, Paris, London, who knows where !—while I have been left alone without any one to comfort me. Where is the filial piety you are so proud of ? And where your patriotism ? Fine patriotism indeed !—living

always abroad, keeping up the worst traditions of your class—the young noble who thinks Poland a fine country, but not fine enough to live in. Filial piety indeed!—leaving your poor mother alone month after month, during the long winter. Letter after letter I wrote you, but without avail.”

“But mother” pleaded Lelewel, “in every letter you said you hoped I would never come back to Poland.”

“What if I said that! Anyone who had in him an atom of real love for his mother would have known what I really meant. A true son would have read with the eyes of the heart, not with the eyes of the head. If my letters said ‘Stay away,’ they *meant* ‘Come back’——”

“But mother” pitifully, “how was I to know?”

“How were you to know?” she shrilled. “Love always knows. Wretched son, you should have known, across Europe, that my letters were bidding you to my side; you should have known that I loved you so much that I wanted you to love me enough to see that I was lying. No one has ever loved me like that, neither the count, nor the prince your father, nor the dear general. But what are husbands? From the son of my womb I hoped for more, for the love that is impossible, the love that is greater than the love we know we can get. Ah cruel son, you are tearing my heart into shreds!”

Lelewel stood imploringly before her: “But mother dear, you forget. When I wrote from Rome in January, asking if you wouldn’t like me to come back for early spring, you sent me a strange note, written in red ink capitals, which said only STAY AWAY, STAY AWAY FOREVER!”

“The red ink meant COME! The capitals means COME!”

“But mother, I came. You know I came all the way from Rome in April for a week or two just to see you, and when I got here I found that the moment you had had my telegram you had packed up and gone away from the chateau, leaving no address. How could I help thinking you were trying to put me in the wrong——”

“Trying to put you in the wrong! Oh contemptible, oh viper!” she gasped.

“And if I went away again, it was only because I thought,

because I couldn't help thinking, that I was doing what you wanted."

Now she was shrieking: "Doing what I wanted! He slights my affection, sees not its subtilty at all, and then tries to justify himself; tramples on my mother's love, and then tries to prove he is in the right! *Ow!*" She howled, and swooned back on the sofa between her two supporters.

The Canoness produced salts from a reticule, applied them to the great suffering nose, and glared at her half-brother. "How dare you? Your poor noble mother!"

"Yes," piped the dwarf in a high yet hollow voice, breaking silence for the first time: "Your saintly mother!" I watched his face furtively, ready at once to look away. (He knew, was already playing with me.) As Lelewel sprang forward—"Go down on your knees" he squeaked, "and beg for forgiveness."

The Generaless, who throughout her faint had contrived to keep her eyes half-open, had been waiting for this guerdon of humiliation. She allowed Lelewel to cover her bony right hand with kisses, then in timely fashion recovered from her swoon and shrilly asked: "Are you sorry? Do you repent?"

"I repent" said Lelewel.

There was a moment's pause, while the Generaless fumbled in her handbag for a notebook, which she handed to her son.

"Write 'I repent.'"

"No" said Lelewel indignantly, not slave enough for that.

"Then" piped Zwan, "there is no real repentance."

"No real repentance" chorused the women.

Here Mademoiselle Weronika, who had been looking on with growing impatience, broke in, sharply admonishing her mother. (She spoke in Polish; as with all talk in that language, at any rate during my first week or two, I could only guess what she said: a mixture of what she probably did say and what I would have said in her place, the few words I actually understood seasoning the mixture with a dash of approximate truth.) "It's disgraceful" she concluded, "Julian's first day with you for over a year."

"Quite!" sneered the Canoness, "his first day with his poor mother for over a year."

Weronika retorted with stalwart abuse; then turned to her

brother : " Now you're back, put down your foot *at once*. Teach the pack of them to behave."

Like most humans, even in the midst of most sincere and savage ' scenes,' they none of them forgot to act, never forgot they were acting, that all life is stage-play, that all sincerest emotions wear applause-cadging finery and masks—none of them was unaware of me, the new spectator. And I was acting the spectator (meanest of masks), and applauding the actors, thereby to cadge their approval.

Lelewel resumed in French. " I want you to understand, mother, that I love you as I have always loved you. But now I have come back again, I mean to be master in my own house "; forcibly-feeblely ; forcibly because his sister was speaking in him, feeblely because of his mother's gimlet stare. " This is the last row I'm going to have. Klementyna and Zwan can stay with you if and as long as they behave themselves and refrain from stirring up trouble ; not longer. As for you "—he turned sharply to the dwarf—" it is you who stir my mother up, you who are responsible for all this hate——"

" Hate ! " shrilled Zwan, and by some mad hypnotic trick made the five others of us repeat the word, one after the other, speaking in turn ; and with the word ran through each one of us a shuddering vision of the thing. I saw it physically, yet formlessly, as *evil in motion* : a dark moving mass that had split God asunder, split Him into the fragments that were us.

Lelewel, who had echoed the word last, must have seen Hate too ; but seemed to be cowering before it rather than buckling himself for its overthrow. Furiously I prayed that he would fight.

He woke up, shook off the incubus and shouted : " Yes, *hate* ! And it's you. And you will stop it here and now, and you will be civil to me. Remember what you are : a rat, a menial. Not a member of the family, but a servant."

There was a gathering second of silence ; then——

" Servant " screamed the Generaless, " He's a Saint."

" A Saint " screeched Grimalkin.

" Saint or no Saint," cried Lelewel, " I want peace, and peace I'm going to have."

Zwan peered quickly forward, stared into his eyes, and in a

voice that set me trembling, intoned "Peace, you say. The peace of God." Lelewel quailed.

"Enough" said the Generaless coldly—up, left turn, forward!—and the trio moved towards the hall.

As they were disappearing through the curtains, Zwan turned, fixed Lelewel again. "The peace of God" he whispered.

Weronika burst into a torrent of Polish, trying I suppose to stiffen up her brother's resistance and counselling him to crush their mother's pigmy master once for all. Presently she went out of the room.

I had been in this household not above an hour, but I was already part of it, by the right of common comprehension, as of something at once real and wholly unreal, of what was happening (of everything that happens), and by the right of foreordained fact, since they knew and I knew and Zwan knew that, though I had entered this playhouse as a member of the audience, already I was part of the play.

"You're quite one of us now" said Lelewel, smiling vaguely.

"Why?"

"Because you know you are. Because you weren't merely watching that family scene, but were taking part in it. What did you think of it?" he added, half proudly.

I avoided mention of his mother. "Monsieur Zwan is trying to hypnotise you" was all I said.

"Oh, no. Absurd!" I saw, more than ever, that unlike me he was *unaware*; did not remember or even know what had been happening. "He is of course queer, a perverted mystic perhaps; but if I thought he had hypnotic power over *me*, he should leave my house this moment. He has of course a disturbing influence over my mother. For all that, he's a holy man. Would you dare touch a holy man? What is wrong with my dear mother is an unsatisfied heart. She wants more love than there is love in any human heart to give."

"Like everyone else."

"I know, but Zwan tells her such affection exists; complete, absolute."

"It's not true, anyway ; it doesn't. There lies one of the chief and most selfish of God's cruelties ; he has fashioned us with souls that yearn for an absolute love, knowing that the yearning can never be satisfied : except perhaps in Him. Only the preachers know ; the poets are fools or liars. On this earth love perfectly mutual, mutually perfect, does not and cannot exist."

"That's as may be ; the point is that Zwan tells her that it does and can ; and that if husband and children have withheld it from her, the fault is theirs. So she rages against us, not God. Yet I love her ; when I was a child she was kind and loving ; I always remember that—her love. I've led a selfish, sensual, cynical life enough, but never in theory, only in practice. The self of my own I am fond of is still the good one, so I still always try to remember only the good in other people too ; seek to visualise them as they are in their best moments. That is the real them ; the other moments aren't normal, are aberrations, don't you agree ? "

"Well, either it's that, or else " (these three words in English) " the exact reverse."

"Reverse, what's that mean ? "

"*Le contraire.*"

"*Le contraire* ? What's that mean ? Love, what's that mean ? What's anything mean ? Peace of God—what's that mean ? Not the *words*, but the awful meaning behind them, something horrible—ah ! " And he clutched at me shuddering, and in agony whispered : " Tell me, which is it ? Is there Anything—or Nothing ? "

"Not Nothing, anyway " I lied, to comfort him.

"Then you're real ! But who then are you ? What are you here for ? "

"Here in Poland you mean ? "

"Yes."

"To talk English to you."

"English : why ? I don't want to learn English. I speak Polish and French and German, and sufficient Russian to get along with. That's enough. What do you mean, saying you're here to talk English ? I don't understand."

"Nor do I " I said loudly, edging away a little, to give myself courage and to affright the familiar spirit now holding

him. "Surely you came to Oxford to find an Englishman who would come to Poland with you to help you with your English? Else why am I here? Or am I dreaming?"

"You're dreaming. We're all dreaming. Oxford? It's in England; a town with a university. Yes. I went there. Now why?" (He was not playacting, was genuinely racking 'his' brains.) "Of course: to see Czelten and Klobukowski; they're students there. But why did I go all the way from Rome to see them? There was a reason, there must have been a reason. It's away there, far away. I can't reach it. Tell it me, tell me the reason!"

Quickly I saw that my chance of uncovering the mystery was to fall in with his mood, to give way a little to the power, though it might possess me too. I knew the risk I was taking, and—for once courageous, approaching instead of fleeing the central madness—took it. "Don't you remember?" I droned, and my personality began changing with my voice. "You attached certain conditions. You said the young Englishman's initials must be E. L.; you said——"

"Ah, yes," he broke in, and the same voice went on speaking, though through his lips again, "and he must be twenty one years of age, not more than twenty one years seven months, not less than——"

The voice changed bodies: "Twenty one years two months——"

"And he must have spent last Holy Thursday near this line!"—and his automaton's hand moved to his breast-pocket to bring forth that devil's map. No, a large envelope only, with an address in foreign handwriting. "Look!" he cried, "look at the red line!" and he passed his forefinger slowly across the envelope, following a line that was not there; a line that my eyes, *still my own*, could not see. "Are you real?" he added, scarce audible again: "Are you here? Is anybody real?" He was limp, huddled, hardly a man.

I too was failing.

Fear outran curiosity; I pulled myself together sharply and got free; rose from my chair and shouted in his ear: "I am going back to England."

He stiffened, sat bolt upright, and said in his normal voice:

"I'm sorry, I've been wandering. What did you say : you're going back to England. You're mad !"

It took me a few seconds to realise that I was talking to another man, who had been away from the world since about the word *contraire* a page back. "Yes," I replied, "I'm going back—unless you're quite certain you want me to stay," tailing my phrase to doubtful finish as I saw sane Lelelew back again.

"How queer you English are !" he said, smiling indulgently. "Of course I want you to stay. But let's drop here and now the nonsense about your being my English tutor" (so do fled selves bequeath volitions to their successors) "and agree that you stay here simply as a friend till the end of September, or whenever it is you have to get back to Oxford. I don't want to learn English in any case ; there's a lot too much of it talked already, quite apart from the fact that——. What did I say ? Ah, yes : we're moving towards a one-language world, and I'd like to do my part in fighting against that. Poor French has only progressed snail-pace during the last generation. I don't know the figures. You're the man for figures."

"Number of people speaking it, you mean ? It's gone up during the last thirty years from about say forty-five to fifty millions. Not more, even when you've counted in Belgium and Romance Switzerland and North Africa, though it is fighting hard and will die, if it ever dies—if the great Anglo-Saxon sword smites hard enough—with all its wounds in front."

"Then German ! Perhaps—what is it ?—eighty million persons speak German ; and if they win the coming war—Ora pro nobis ! Otherwise, they will hardly increase much ; there isn't room. (Brutes ; but I love Bavaria, don't you ?) Spanish and Russian have a big future, of course, but English !—why if you add together England and all her colonies and the United States and the Far East, which is learning to speak it too, why then . . ."

I decided to stay.

The remainder of the afternoon till supper-time I spent in unpacking and in arranging my rooms. The books in my big

transcontinental trunk, which had been sent across Europe by rail, were imperially messed about and damaged : the hands of the Russian customs officials had been busy, the lynx-eyes of the secret service functionaries. They must have had ample leisure, these gentry, and learning withal. The whole of the pernicious and subversive literature my trunk contained—the works of the mild demulcent historians I was reading for my Finals—had clearly been perused and comprehended, for pages which spoke ill of Mother Russia were torn out of this book and that. In Bolton King's gentle *Life of Mazzini*, for instance, page 307-308 had been ripped away. And quite right too ! Did it not contain (so I found on my return to England when I referred to an inviolate copy) the word 'Czarism'—in inverted commas to boot—and that final, that penal phrase : 'Muscovite ambitions' ? Free happy Russia of before the war ! Alack for those golden days ! (Reactionary Reader : How dare you ? The Tsarist mutilating of books was small sin compared to the Bolshevik slaughtering of innocents. Revolutionary Reader : Bolshevik murders indeed ! Acts of just revenge. What about Siberia ; the tortures, the floggings, the screams of the dying, the darkness ?)

Lelewel came up about seven o'clock, and took me downstairs to supper. The full household was assembled. The great dining-hall was lighted dimly, by oil lamps hanging from the ceiling ; we were a ghostly company.

At the end of the table nearest the door sat the Generaless, with the Canoness on her left and the dwarf on her right. At the other end sat the Grandmother, with her tiny *dame de compagnie*, Mdlle. Sabbatyn, by her side. Lelewel was on her right and I on her left, opposite him. Between Lelewel and the Canoness sat his sister Weronika ; between Zwan and myself—we were far apart and being on the same side could hardly see each other—were Count Morawski and, next to me, simpering Sebastyan. The talk was partly in Polish and partly in French ; the Generaless and her couple spoke only the latter. Sebastyan alone poured intolerable English into my left ear.

The meal was novel, and it was immense. I noted, in joy commingled with awe, the fashion in which my dear ninety-nine-year-old neighbour managed to put the victuals away ; there she sat, steadily shovelling food into her mouth with a

wooden spoon, looking neither to the right nor yet to the left, talking to no one, looking expectantly at her plate the moment it was empty for it to be filled again, which happened at once, and she had second helpings of everything ; shoving, shovelling away. My left-hand neighbour was a glutton also ; a disgusting, not engaging, one. As the manservant bore round each new course, Sebastyan sought, with eyes and nostrils strained, to appraise the coming dish from afar ; he followed it with pained concentration on its journey round the table to those who were helped before him, and when it came to him, took helpings at once disgustingly large and preciously selected, hovering and hesitating for over a minute—and in matters like that a minute is full sixty seconds long—before deciding what were the best (remaining) morsels in a dish (say) of fricassée of chicken. How he grabbed and grabbed, how he royned and ravened, how he champed and chewed. How sticky, how audible his triumphant crunching of best bits.

The manservant, a butler dressed—unlike the rest of the servants, who were in peasant costume—in seedy western black, got on my nerves at once. From the moment he set eyes on me, he began making faces. I thought my eyes must be deceiving me in the uncertain light, and kept staring to make sure. He seemed to take my stare as a challenge, and made uglier grimaces still. Soon he filled me with alarm, and I fell to wondering what part this squat brutish butler was to play in the new life of madness I had entered upon, when my attention was diverted by someone squeezing my hand. Though the squeeze came from my left, I did not realise at once that the squeezer was Sebastyan, as he was in the middle of an animated conversation with Lelewel about painting.

“ Fra Lippo Lippi ” he was saying, and then came another squeeze, and he waxed yet more enthusiastic in his praise of the early Italians. I pulled my hand sharply away. He took no notice whatever, and went on with his conversation.

Then the Generaless began shouting at me from the other end of the table.

“ I expect you thought you would find Poland very cold, didn't you ? And now you find it is hotter than England, don't you ? Not that I have ever been in England, but I'm sure the summer there's much colder than in Poland, isn't it ? ”

"I wouldn't say that," I replied. "During the summer of two years ago, 1911—a specially warm summer, I admit—I was up in the Lake District, in the north of England, quite a cold part of the country according to our standards, and yet one day it was 98 in the shade."

"98?" she cried. "What do you mean? 28 more likely."

"No, 98. It is a different system of reckoning. We use the Fahrenheit thermometer in England, you know. What is it here?" I asked Lelewel.

"Réaumur or Centigrade, chiefly the latter. Let me see, 98 in Fahrenheit would be about—I'm not quite sure. There is some easy way of converting one into the other, but I can't remember it. I think you subtract 30 or 32 and then multiply by four-ninths——"

"Five-ninths" corrected Sebastyan aggressively.

"You don't, that's not right," snapped Grimalkin. "You merely halve it."

"No you don't. You multiply by five-ninths or four-ninths, or whatever it is," screeched the Generaless, who just as obviously knew nothing about it, but was determined to quarrel, "and *then* you subtract the thirty-two."

In a moment the lot of them, except the old grandmother, who merely went on guzzling, were bandying rival calculations in different languages, and quarrelling bitterly.

"I have it," said Lelewel. "98 Fahrenheit is 39 Centigrade, or 34 Réaumur."

"How do you know that?" snapped the Generaless. "You can't work out figures like that in your head. The best way to arrive at things like that is to guess them, magically."

She turned to Zwan.

"Thirty seven," he piped.

I started. It happened to be my magic number, and I knew that Zwan was right. The whole table, enemy or friend of Zwan's, seemed to share my impression, knew that if Zwan gave an opinion, being not a reasonable but an unreasonable opinion, it was surely right.

Work it out for yourself.

After supper the Grandmother and the Sabbatyn departed at once, followed by Weronika. A few minutes later the

Generaless and her party bade us Good night. Lelewel and Morawski remained, hanging about in the evident hope, unrealised hope, that Sebastyan also would depart. As soon as they saw he had no such intention, Lelewel and Morawski accompanied me upstairs to my room, shaking him off with some difficulty in the hall.

"I will say Good night" said Lelewel at my door, "as I must see my sister. I hope you will be thoroughly happy and comfortable here. I will leave Karol Morawski, who, except my sister, is my only friend in my own house, to tell you something about us all."

And so Morawski did. From the point of view of this narrative he is, indeed, a most useful character, and my notes of what he told me about the others will best introduce them; but he was still more useful to me in actual fact that July evening ten years ago, for if his judgments on the people I was now to live with were his own, I soon found that on the whole they were mine too. And not every greenhorn foreigner thrown suddenly into the midst of a new mad world, finds on his first evening a sane guide thereto, who points out to him the pleasant places and warns him of the quagmires and pitfalls.

"Julian tells me you have come to stay here for the whole summer" he began. "I am a great friend of his, perhaps his greatest friend. As you are a friend of his too, I would like you to know where you are. You'll need to, I'm afraid, for we are a queer household. You will think I am very much on one side in what I tell you. I am. Don't pretend to be anything else. Well then: three or four of us are reasonably sane and decent people; the others are either scoundrels or lunatics."

"Which are *you*?"

"Eh? I'd not thought of it. Neither of the latter, I hope!"

"I'm sure. I didn't mean to be rude."

"Not at all! Any more questions?"

"Yes: *who* are you?"

"As I said, I am a friend of Julian Lelewel's, incidentally a distant cousin. I have a place of my own in Lithuania, but as I know nothing about the practical side of running a big

estate—I have lived almost always abroad—I am spending a year on Julian's estate to pick up the knowledge I need. I am glad we shall have you here to liven us up for two or three months, as things are damnably dull. I am told you are clever, which rather frightens me, as I am exceedingly stupid. Not that I've not done a certain amount of reading. But the only things I really care about are women and horses and the country. I'm twenty seven and I'm rich. I believe in having a good time and I fear no one. Who are you?"

"I'm an Englishman, as you know. I know little about women, less about horses, least of all about the country. I am an undergraduate of the University of Oxford. I have never been abroad before, I am twenty one, and I'm poor. I believe in God and I fear the Devil."

"Ah!" said Morawski.

"Go on" I urged.

"Well, we had never heard anything at all about you until about three weeks ago, when Julian wrote from Paris to his sister, saying that he was bringing a young English friend to stay with him for the summer. Then to-day he told me that he wanted you to have a good time here, and asked me to give you the geography and history of us all. I'm not good at character description. I hardly know where to begin. Ask me some questions."

"Well, there are one or two little things that have puzzled me already. For instance—I hope I may speak frankly, and that I am not speaking disrespectfully of someone who may be the family's oldest retainer—but what in the name of heaven have I done to that old butler who waits at table? All through supper he was pulling the most villainous faces at me."

Morawski chuckled. I was not sure of him.

"How funny! That wasn't your fault at all; Julian should have told you. In Poland it is an old custom that all guests should shake hands with the servants on first coming to stay at a house. I suppose Jan was furious because you omitted to do so. Hardly any foreigners come to the house, and he would not realise you didn't know."

"I'm most awfully sorry. Is it too late now? It will be rather awkward going round shaking hands with them all. How many servants are there?"

"Oh, it's only necessary with the chief ones. In any case, it doesn't matter now ; I'll put that right."

"Then the Prince's cousin, M. Sebastyan. Isn't he a bit queer ?"

"A bit queer ! He's the vilest, most conceited, insupportable scoundrel imaginable. Look at him !—dressed like a tailor's model, painted like an actress, vain to lunacy. He spends hours in front of the mirror, first naked, then in his underclothes, then in one suit after another, preening and admiring himself at every stage of the proceedings. He has ten sorts of breath-sweetening jujubes, which he sucks in turns all day long—and my God ! he needs 'em—and the tightest corsets east of Potsdam. The only thing that does him any good is a horsewhipping. He had one once from me, and has naturally never forgiven me. He inherited a large fortune, but spent it all in dissipation in Germany, and has now no home. That is, except Julian's here, where he lives month after month, sponging on Julian, exploiting his good nature, and all the time saying evil of the house and of the servants and of us all. Don't lend him any money ; you'll never see it again if you do. All the same, though he is so unbearable, in the crisis that this household's in the middle of and that Julian's return has precipitated, Sebastyan is not the person of chief importance."

"Who is ?"

"You know already. But wait : I should tell you that the real division here—for there are two factions, we are typical Poles in that ; factiousness has always been our national fault and our downfall—is between Julian and his sister and grandmother on the one hand (and I'm a friend of theirs, of course), and Julian's mother and her daughter the Canoness, and that criminal lunatic the dwarf, who is trying to rule her, and through her the house, on the other. In the various matters that divide Julian's party from his mother's, Sebastyan is fairly neutral, though inclining to Julian's side, because he knows he can always wheedle brass out of him. Every now and then, however, he makes a show of independence, and to filch a little more money threatens to help the Generaless."

"Tell me about the Generaless."

"Julian and Weronika are her children by her second

husband, the old Prince Aleksander Lelewel. Her first husband, the father of the Canoness Klementyna, was a nephew of Julian's grandmother here, the old Countess Ostowska, so that Julian and the Canoness are cousins as well as half-brother and half-sister, and while Julian is old Ostowska's grandchild, the Canoness is her great niece. I'll tell you the importance of that in a moment. When old Prince Aleksander died, Julian's mother married yet a third time, the Russian General Tanski. Since then she's been very pro-Russian, half denationalised in fact, though she has remained a pious Catholic. Out of respect for Julian, I'll make no comments on her. You have seen her."

"And M. Zwan?"

"The bug! *Who* he is I couldn't tell you; no one's ever been able to find out his origin, though according to his own account he's half Russian and half Polish in blood. He was a kind of factotum to General Tanski, and when the latter died three or four years ago, and his widow returned to her son's house here, she brought Zwan with her. Pretty well everyone here, except myself and Weronika, whether they like him or loathe him, persists in regarding him as a saint; he's got some sort of religious power or influence, though of a damned unhealthy kind. In my view, though, it's mostly pretence. He's a hypocrite and a money-grabber. Not that he sponges in Sebastyan's pettifogging way, whining for fifty roubles here, twenty roubles there. He's after much bigger game. His influence over the Generaless is total; she wants to set him up as ruler of this house, or perhaps to rule the house herself, and in turn be ruled by Zwan. He may be despicable, and he's certainly not a man, but his power you can see. The Canoness too is completely under his thumb; Sebastyan, who is as cowardly as he is effeminate, is in his heart of hearts frightened of him. The servants daren't move a finger against him. Even Julian, though he would never admit it, is not immune. If I were you, I should have nothing to do with him. Take my warning."

"I have been warned already."

"Already? By whom?"

"By spirits in England. Long before I knew I should ever be coming here, or even coming abroad, I was warned

that somewhere in Eastern Europe I was to beware of a dwarf."

Morawski sat up.

"God's name! I hoped better things of you. You'll be another of the devotees soon."

"And Mdlle. Weronika?" I said quickly, to change the subject.

"I don't think we'll talk about her" he said shortly.

"Why?"

"Why? Because she's a *nice woman*" (in English), "and it's more interesting discussing unpleasant folk than pleasant, don't you think?"

"Rather!"

"As I said, there are two factions here, but quite apart from the main issues, there's eternal quarrelling. There's a Polish element, and a Russian element, and an international element, and whatever's most quarrelsome in all three seems to predominate. We quarrel over everything. We quarrel over nothing. We quarrel over thermometers, as you saw at supper to-night. We quarrel most bitterly over politics. Our party, especially the grandmother and Weronika, is violent against Russians. It's Grandmother that hates them most, and that's saying a good deal; though even so, her hate for Russians is but the wannest palest reflection of her hate for Jews. Once she struck an old Jew pedlar dead with hate. But the Jew phobia I'll tell you about later; for the moment I was telling you about the Russia row. In opposition to our party, the Generaless and Zwan of course are pro-Russian: Tsar-cringers. Then we—or rather they, for with all my vices, I'm the least disputatious of any of them, except perhaps Julian—quarrel over religion, and the power the priests should or should not have in a re-born Poland. But the major quarrels are over the grandmother's will. She's a most remarkable woman, you know. She's said to be the only surviving Amazon of the 1831 rebellion, in which she was wounded twice. Her memory is sometimes muddled, but only, as she will tell you, in respect of things that have happened 'in the last sixty years'! She's fanatically patriotic, and as fanatically pious; sometimes one of these two sentiments gets the upper hand, sometimes the other. Julian knows that by moral right he

should inherit his grandmother's fortune, which is considerable, while his mother the Generaless, egged on by Zwan, is quite determined to get it for herself. Every few months the old lady makes a new will, so that it is entirely a matter of chance which party will get it all in the end. As the last will she made, a month or two ago, in Julian's absence and under extreme pressure from Zwan and the Generaless, is in their favour, they are praying night and day for her speedy death. She is much fonder of Julian and Weronika than of any one else, and no doubt now that Julian has returned will soon make up her mind to change her will again, especially as they are patriotic ; and as she has had a bout of piety for some months, she is ready for a bout of patriotism. On the other hand, neither one nor the other are quite good enough Catholics, and now that the old lady is beginning to dodder, she is coming more and more under the priests' influence, and the village priest of course is worked by Zwan. Two nights ago she had an attack, and Zwan and the Generaless and the priest stayed until three o'clock in the morning in her bedroom, praying ———"

" — Praying for the swag——"

" You've got it."

" But explain : how could she leave money to the Generaless who is, after all, only her son's wife, and who you say married again ? "

" Well, for one thing there's pretty well absolute freedom of testamentary disposition in this country : about the only freedom they've left us, being a freedom that harms us. The actual form of the will would be in favour of the Canoness, who is her great-niece, but the Canoness means the Generaless, and the Generaless means Zwan."

" Another question : if she is Lelewel's father's mother, why isn't she called Lelewel too ? Why is she called Ostowska ? "

" Because, like all the rest of them, she had the marrying habit, and married again, though the second husband died some mere sixty or seventy years ago. Listen " (he lowered his voice) " —this is a thing I oughtn't to tell you, but it will help you to avoid dropping bricks, such as asking Julian if he has any brothers—talking of marrying again, Julian's father

also married twice. And the son of the first marriage is Julian's 'corpse,' the skeleton in his cupboard. Some years before he married the Generaless old Prince Aleksander was badly in debt, the whole estate was mortgaged, and he was completely in the hands of the Jews, owing almost all the money to one particularly rich and revolting Hebrew money-lender, the scum of the Warsaw ghetto. This sheeny pressed hard for his money, and of course old Prince Lelewel couldn't pay, and his estates were about to be sold, when the old Jew proposed terms. If Lelewel would marry his daughter, then the whole debt would be cancelled, and there would be an enormous dowry in addition. This daughter was a girl about eighteen or so, wonderfully good-looking as it happened ; but still, no civilised man could marry a sheeny."

"Why?" I asked, remembering Godstone, not specially loving Jews, but unable to comprehend this violence.

"Why?" said Morawski, "because they are not men but vermin, and here in Poland they are more numerous and verminous than elsewhere."

"Leaving out the vermin part, why are they more numerous in Poland than elsewhere? I forget it, but I know there's some historical reason."

"Casimir and Esther."

"Casimir the Great you mean? Who's Esther?"

"The lady he was fond of, who happened to be a sheeny, and to please whom he invited Jews into the Kingdom from all over Europe, and heaped every sort of privilege upon them until they filled the towns, and till after a while all trade and all the learned professions too were in their hands. I don't think Casimir saw the harm he was doing to his country, though after a few years of Esther he at least found out how revolting *one* sheeny was. One fine day our King was embracing his lady-love, as kings like other men do embrace women, you know, and, as these things will happen, if only one embraces a woman enough, suddenly her head-dress got loose, and revealed a most noisome and revolting scalp: she was in the last stages of the porrigo—the scaldhead. He picked her up and threw her out of the window. She died. That ought to have been a lesson, but by that time Esther's scaldheaded fellow-countrymen were entrenched everywhere,

living on the fat of the land. They were then, as they have been ever since, an enemy in our midst, betraying our country to all her enemies. Naturally they have sometimes got what they deserved. That old Radziwill knew how to treat them—who tarred their beards, and used them as torches. My God ! how we hate them, and how they hate us back, and always try to down the *goy*. In all Russia's wars against us, and all our insurrections against Russia, they have turned traitor and spied and spread false news and destroyed our stores and cut off stragglers ; everywhere and always stabbed us in the back. The one good thing the Russians ever do is to organise pogroms, slashing 'em, cutting 'em in two, smashing the faces of their women and children——” Morawski's peaceful face was now livid ; at that moment he could have done good work in a pogrom himself.

“ Go on about the old Prince Lelewel.”

“ Well, I am the mildest of men, almost a pro-Jew compared to some——”

“ A *Semitophile* ! ” (I repeated the barbarous word), “ Come, come ! ”

“ I assure you. Ask dear Grannie. She calls me Friend of the Sheenies, because I once said at table there were Christians who were worse than Jews, and though she really rather likes me—more than I do her—for a few days she was on at Julian to turn me out of the house.”

“ Why ‘ more than you do her ’ ? ”

“ Because—well, wait till you see her on the hate ! Her face looks like old Satan's, and I funk that, as the others funk Zwan.—Anyway, to go on, as I said I'm the tame pro-Jew of this household, and if I feel as I do against them, you can imagine what old Lelewel's friends of a generation ago must have thought when, to save his estates, which had been in his family for hundreds of years, he caved in to the sheeny, married his verminous daughter, took her as his lawful wife, and settled down in his chateau to live with her, where they were, of course, shunned and banned by the whole countryside. They had one child, a son. When they brought the news to old Ostowska—she was old then, though it must be nearly forty years ago—when they told her that a creature was born with her blood and Jew blood mixed in its veins, they

say the Devil possessed her. Kneeling before the Cross, she called down the Devil's curse upon the infant's head, and *prayed* for his eternal perdition. He is still alive: a man of nearly forty now, a good deal older than Julian. This boy was heir to all the estates; the old Jew had kept his word, and cancelled all the debts. The odd thing is that Lelewel loved the Jew woman, and she him——”

“ Even in them the two *races* loathed each other, I expect.” (It was a sudden vision of Oxford Goldstein's face that made me speak. A few days after he had been in my rooms I had learnt that his mother was a Gentile, and I remembered that all through his tirade I had watched his eyes and seen that they were a woman's.) “ A loathing the more violent in that it knew itself kept under by love——”

“ Quite, though I don't altogether follow you. Certainly she loved him more than her own child, so much so that on her deathbed she confessed that she had been married before, and that, for all she knew, her first husband, a Warsaw Yidd who had gone off to America years before, might still be alive. He had deserted her a few weeks after his marriage—he must have been an odd Jew, by the way, because they are the faith-fullest vermin of wives and husbands in the world—and of course her father had forced her to keep it dark when he was trying to marry her to Lelewel. So, in her love for her Gentile husband, she stamped her own child with bastardy, who, half-sheeny, half-aristocrat—disowned by the Prince his father, and cursed for Satan's own by the witch his grandmother—grew up to be the oddest and foulest of mongrels. When he came of age he announced that he would call himself by the preposterous name of Count Bethlehem Zwelewely.* The title he had of course no right to; he chose it to enrage the nobles, his father's class; Bethlehem was to mock at his father's religion, and Zvelly-Velly to parody his father's name. His father's, I say; though it was his grandmother he regarded as the Enemy: not to be forgiven even in Hell——”

“ Is he in Hell? ”

“ Not yet; he lives in a remote estate that belonged to the older Lelewel somewhere down in the south-west of Russian Poland, near the frontier, a long way the other side of Warsaw,

* Pronounced *Zvelly-Velly*, and I will write it so.

shunned by everybody, alone with a servant or two, witches like him, for he has a dark reputation ; all the countryside hold him to be a wizard. They say he is Twardowski."

"Who?"

"Twardowski, the Polish Faust : *the real Faust*. He lived under Sigismund Augustus and, in real fact—if these things are facts ; you believe them anyway—concluded a pact with the Devil, signing it with his own blood on a hide. When the Devil came to fetch him, he was feeding at an inn, at the Sign of the City of Rome. Twardowski was shivering with terror when he saw his master, but the name of the inn helped him a little, and he began frantically saying the Holy Hours. This prevented the Devil taking him completely away, but he pulled him as far from the earth as he could, into the middle space between the sky and the earth, where he still is, or still was rather, until as the peasants believe he came to earth again in the body of Bethlehem Zvelly-Velly. Though others say he is not Twardowski, but Twardowski's Master, the Devil himself."

Dwarf : Devil ? Zvelly-Velly : Zwan ?

"Have you ever seen him?" I asked faintly.

"No. Hardly any one has, except Julian, who sometimes visits him in secret. He doesn't tell his sister or any of them except myself, as here they all naturally want to forget that old Lelewel ever had a sheeny for a wife and a demon for a child. It is not flattering to our dear Generaless, especially as she forgave, even if she did not forget, her ghetto predecessor."

"Is it all true? You don't believe things like that?"

"I wouldn't go and spend a night alone with Bethlehem, I believe that! Don't you either, if Julian Lelewel, as he might, takes it into his head to take you to see him. You said just now you were frightened of the Devil; those are just the kind of people Zvelly-Velly likes to see. Julian is under his influence, and I know that on his rare visits to his half-brother he sometimes takes somebody with him, perhaps to protect himself, or as a kind of offering. They don't always come back."

"And Julian?" I asked after a silence, "is he afraid of the Devil?"

Morawski shuffled nervously, seemed to be regretting that

he had said so much. "Don't talk rot," he said. "In future we will talk no more family and no more folly. I am glad to know you. I am sure you will live things up. Get a good sleep. Good night."

A few minutes after Morawski had left me, the serving-maid came in with a ewer of hot water; I remembered Morawski's hint, and as soon as she had put the jug down, grasped her warmly by the hand. She shrank back in terror, on her face writ large the fear that the gentle-faced foreign young gentleman was a bad one, and meant the violent worst. She fled precipitately out of the bedroom, through the sitting-room, and scuttled along the stone passage outside.

Really, what had I done?

I opened the sitting-room door, and could hear her speaking to some one in excited Polish. Morawski came back in a moment, roaring with laughter.

"I'm sorry," he said, "that was a hoax about having to shake hands with the servants. You have scared poor Wanda, though I have managed to calm her down. Not that she had much virginity to lose; but your attack was rather sudden, and took the poor wench by surprise. She needs a little time, you know, a little patience."

"So you have been telling me lies all the evening!—What is the real reason the old butler was so angry?"

"He wasn't angry with you at all. He merely has a nervous tic which gets worse if people stare at him as you did."

"It was a lie then, and I presume that the rest of what you have been telling me was lies also?"

"No, that's what I came back to say to you—I was delayed a moment by that poor outraged girl—that that first little thing I told you about the servants was a lie, and that everything else was true."

"I'll see," I said. "Good night." And we shook hands again.

CHAPTER X : CLEVEREST LIVING POLE

I was soon absorbed by my new life. The past became unreal with a speed which new surroundings had never before engendered.

I got up early, took a walk in the park, came back to coffee and rolls in my sitting-room, and worked till dinner : an orgy of food and quarrelling. Everyone, except Milord Sebastyan, spoke to me in French, and since half of them—the Zwan-Generaless party—spoke also among themselves in that language, and since moreover I quickly came to understand a good deal of what passed in Polish, I could soon, despite that barrier which exists for ears but not for stomachs, enjoy almost equally food and quarrelling both. Julian wanted me to spend the afternoons riding with him and Karol Morawski, but no nag sorry enough for my standard of safety (or at least pleasure) could be found in the stables, and after a first day or two of falls and fears I rarely accompanied them, preferring to row on the pool, swim in a more distant lake as the pool's waters were stagnant, or lounge in the park either alone or with Mademoiselle Weronika.

The latter, like the nice sensible young woman she was, took a fancy to me : as I to her, partly for the best reason, namely no reason at all, partly out of instinctive reciprocity, partly because she was inspiringly sane, and I knew both consciously and unconsciously that I might soon be needing all the sane company I could get. I perceived her to be a woman unselfish, ignorant and loyal ; of slow temper and mental habit, except where her country and her mother were concerned : vividly loving and loathing these two. She told me of her hates and hopes. I talked to her about friends and enemies of mine in England, and of life in that country. A midland factory-town I spoke of bewitched her ; she thought it a city strange, exotic, mysterious : all of which it is. Walsall in her imagination was like Warsaw in mine.

And often since, in Army days or other, the sound-similarity has provoked query, and my 'When I lived in Walsall'—introductory, autobiographical, weak-*I'd*—has earned immediate 'Did you say Walsall or Warsaw?' and my reflection 'If similar the names, how bizarrely different the towns' has been followed hard by 'Not different at all: for both are but far-away lost cities in the life of someone else—of dead 1907-10 Emmanuel (whom you lived with for three years) of the one place, dead 1913 Emmanuel—whom you remember also—of the other.

Talking of names of places: Lelewel's chateau and village shared together a sibilant fool's-word of twelve letters hyphenated to fourteen more, beginning with *Prz*, and with following *cz* and dotted *z* and *sz*, outgleaming far poor *Przemsyl* of later newspaper fame during the '15 fighting on the Hapsburg-Romanoff front. For my convenience at the time, and to think of it easily aloud, I boiled the name down to *Praz*; and will so write it here also.

The park swarmed with peasants and children, who touched their hats and bowed low, enkindling in me shame and fury; the blood rushed to the temples, swiftness maybe because it was but doubtfully blue (though I have parchments to prove to you that I descend from Kings of England and of Scotland, of France and of Castile), as it may rush sometimes also to the brow of a King, who too may feel shamefaced when men duck and bow, thinking of the Maid Democracy, and how those who are doffing their obsequious hats—awestruck schoolboy Danton at the Rheims crowning, trembling schoolboy Robespierre at the Paris progress that followed Rheims—may one day doff *his* head.

Before supper I did another hour or two's study, and after that second bout of feeding and fighting spent the evening in talk.

At supper my second evening there arose the most tempestuous quarrel I had ever, till then, witnessed. They got up from their chairs, brandished their well-bred forks and spoons, and banged and shrieked and foamed. Weronika and Karol and the Grandmother were maintaining that Russians were worse than Germans; Zwan, the Canoness and above all the Generaless, that Germans were worse than

Russians. The last named was hurling epigrammatic taunts in all directions : " There were two gentlemen and a German"; " There are three divisions of the human race : Christians, Jews and Germans." . . . Sebastyan, a self-conscious neutral hostile to them all, cackled after every remark of either party's and stung them at last into alliance, till the whole tableful set upon him and chased him squealing from the room.

The third day there was a fire out on the plains. In that evening, warm and golden, farms and trees curled up to the sky in smoke ; beds and chairs and tables, hastily rescued, lay scattered on the grass ; kerchiefed women and homeless urchins wept and gesticulated, and I see Julian and Morawski and myself—why do I see myself then, for I was in the picture, not outside it ?—careering about on horseback in a golden landscape set with bunchy trees, as in an old English print.

Supper was late, and afterwards I stayed downstairs talking till after midnight. I said Good night to the others at the top of the stairs and turned along the corridor to the lonely wing I occupied.

I lit the lamp in my sitting-room and carried it through into the bedroom. As I came through the door, and the arc of sudden light revealed the bed, I had an instant's vision : kneeling at the bedside, as in mocking prayer, the dwarf.

I dropped the lamp, which crashed and went out, and stood there in darkness, numb with terror lest the little arms and claws should close around me and crush me, or caress.

There was no sound but my thumping heart. When at last I found courage to strike a match, the dwarf was gone.

If he had ever been there.

Another night I had my first heart-to-heart talk with Sebastyan : I was in my sitting-room reading Lord Acton on the Revolution when he preened into the room.

" Good evening. Now we can talk." He waved his hand contemptuously towards the door to indicate his opinion of the others. " Little minds. Bourgeois morality. Petty nationalist passions. *I* am different. They are children, they are vulgar-minded, they are normal. While I"—earnestly—" I am a great man. My ideas are my own, not thieved from books or others. I am broad-minded, above race prejudice, school-of-philosophy prejudice, sex prejudice.

I speak seven languages perfectly. My clothes are made by a West End tailor, my boots are bought in Paris. And my figure : it is wonderful, is it not ? ” appealingly. As he raved, he flapped his hands winglike from side to side, and hipped his way to and fro across the room, looking meltingly into the mirror each time as he passed it. “ Is it not ? ” he repeated more shrilly, darkening with effeminate rage, “ Is it not ? ”

“ I don’t know.”

“ Don’t know ? ” he echoed, controlling his anger, determined to flatter, if he could not bully, me into agreement, determined to taste the double satisfaction—vanity’s plus victory’s—my acquiescence would bring. “ Don’t know ? Why ? You’re not a fool like the others.”

“ I am.”

“ You’re not ” he snapped. “ You’re fair-minded enough to be able to give in in the end and not let your spirit of contrariness and your feeling that I am morbid get the upper hand of your respect for truth and fact. Look at me ”—he twirled round on his toes like a mannequin—“ is my figure slim and beautifully proportioned, or isn’t it ? Yes or no ? ” wheedling.

Sulkily : “ Yes, then.”

“ Ah ! ”—he clapped his hands with delight—“ your praise is the dearer as it was the more reluctant. Now I can go on. Well then : I am not only better made and better looking than the others, but also, as you English say, much more the *gentleman*. Vanity is a littler vice than false modesty, so I will tell you what I know to be the truth : that—far more than Count Adolf Z., who is an over-dressed bore, or Prince Waleryan C., who talks French no better than a Russian moujik and has the brains of a fly—I am the first gentleman in Poland, as was said of your George the Third——”

“ Fourth.”

He darkened. “ I knew, I knew. I said that to test you, to find what you knew of the history of your own country. I see you don’t believe me.”

“ Maybe not.”

“ Why ? You’re clever enough to, if you want to. Cleverness !—there again, and there more than in anything, I am

crushingly superior to them all. It sounds vain, it is vain, but it's the simple truth when I say this"—he peered forward, impressive, emphatic, idiotic, sincere entirely—" *I am the cleverest living Pole.*"

He paused to let the news sink in, took out a new kind of sweetmeat box from his West End waistcoat pocket and a new kind of jujube therefrom, sucked, postured, and demanded : " Do you believe that ? "

" For all I know it may be true."

" It is true ; it would be wrong for me to pretend it wasn't. If Poland became an independent State again, I should be Prime Minister, or at least ambassador in Paris or London. I'd prefer London. I'd have the embassy in Grosvenor Square, don't you think ? "

" I don't know ; I don't know quite for certain where Grosvenor Square is ; north of the Thames, isn't it ? "

" I thought so," sneering back ; " I sized you up at once. You're middle class, not what you ape to be here with Julian and the others."

" *Lower* middle class," I corrected, to take the wind out of his sails, " or that at any rate is what I ape to be. Now," (sharply) " either clear out or apologise."

He begged my pardon grovellingly, adding " You see my snobbery and desire to wound sometimes get the better of my need for love and admiration. I like you, *really* : though I tell you so chiefly to make you like me. Do you like me ? "

" I don't know."

" Do you admire me ? " Keyed higher.

" I don't think so."

" Do you love me ? " Then, with feverish speed : " Quick, before you answer, look at me, think of my misery, and decide."

I looked, rather gingerly, over the top of Lord Acton, mindful that Maecmillan's solid binding might yet come in useful, and thought of his misery, and answered : " I'm sorry, because you are even more mad and unhappy than you are vain and nasty, but I'm afraid I don't."

" You don't ? " he whimpered : then, his face and mood madly changing, he viciously shouted : " Then you shall

be of use to me ! To begin with, you shall perfect my English."

" Isn't that one of the seven languages you know perfectly ? " I sneered, realising, coward myself, that here was a creature more cowardly ; realising therefore that, as the one who fears least always is, I was the master.

" You shall perfect my English " he cried, flapping his hands in my face.

" You'll need it of course at the Embassy——"

" Listen," changing for an instant his tactics, " I'll teach you things in exchange. You're rising in the world and know very little, I'll be certain, of so useful a subject as the great families of Europe, their ramifications, their descents, and who was the grandfather and great-grandfather of who. I know them all : the Czartoryskis and the Rohans and the Howards and the Radziwills, for instance. I'll teach you."

" Thanks, I expect I know the family trees of as many great families as do you. The Judahs, for instance. You've heard of King David ? "

" Yes."

" And of Ruth ; the Ruth of the Bible story ? "

" Yes."

" Well, did you know that one was the great-grandmother of the other ? "

He went wild again ; shook with spite. "*Canaille !* I give you one day to come to me of your own free will and say, ' Count Sebastyan Lelewel, may I have the honour of helping you with your English ? ' If you don't I shall come to this room the day after to-morrow, and worry or frighten you until——"

" Not frighten me——"

" — until you decide to give me a two hours' conversation lesson every day."

" Your Excellency is confident——"

Footsteps ; and Julian came in. The extravagance of our talk bound us together, and when he rather awkwardly took his leave, and I was alone with friendly Julian, I did not give him away.

" Seb's hateful, isn't he ? "

" I'm not sure."

I was sure at tea-time next day.

Tea was not a formal meal ; the members of the household dropped in any time between four and six o'clock. There was always a samovar, and bread, butter and fruit. On this particular afternoon, Sebastyan and I, the firstcomers, entered the dining-room at the same moment. There was an enormous bowl of raspberries on the table. Without even waiting to sit down, he snatched, in addition to his own, two plates that had been put in other people's places, heaped up all three with veritable red tumuli of berries, emptying almost the entire bowl, and set to noisily, gobbling away.

" Swine ! " I cried.

He stayed his shovelling for a moment, and looked at me, spoon in mouth, with a kind of spiteful surprise. Obviously, if not altogether justly, he attributed my anger to baffled greed, and stretched out his hand to protect the two platefuls on which he had not yet begun.

At supper that night, to punish me for my insolence, and to remind me also that my one day's language-lesson respite was drawing to a close, he began an under-the-table offensive of a quite different kind from the first evening's, pinching me and digging me with his fork, simpering the while to someone else. Once, in a moment when around us some brawl, some brabble, was gathering, he turned to me and whispered :

" Is the soup salt enough ? "

" It's just right, thank you," I was beginning, surprised at this change of front, when he grabbed a great handful from the salt cellar and showered it in my soup.

Nobody took any notice, for meantime, in a roar of strange tongues, around the dim-lit table dark war was raging, and King Bedlam reigned. In ghoulish conclamation Karol, Julian, Weronika, Canoness, Generaless mumbled, protested, vociferated, squeaked and screeched together. The little Sabbatyn coughed and trembled. Grandmother ate faster and faster. Zwan was standing on his chair doing dumb-bell exercises, praying as each tiny arm shot up or out.

The picture swayed and shifted.

The room darkened ; they were all vague shadows ; shadows that fled far before my eyes, distancing and dwindling ; dwindling too the tumult, heard in some other world.

Then tearing near again, all of them huge against my eyes, clangorous in my ears.

Then back into focus : grey Punch and Judy show, Hate working each puppet with his hands.

Ah, they were mad, these dolls. No—panic terror clutched me—it was I who was mad ; who was inventing these shapes and shadows, had invented this journey, this house, this country, this life, this world, this universe . . . Christ Jesus !

There *is* no universe.

That night, as I was beginning to undress, I heard myself saying to myself : “ Write down half-a-dozen words that will sum up for you the half-dozen main impressions of your first few days here : three couplets of words that rhyme, for rhyme has a magic power that frees, not shackles truth. Write out now these words and amplify them, catching thus your first impression of this place and atmosphere.”

For three hours I wrote, and filled an exercise book. I will omit all ‘ I was ten years younger, Reader ’ excuses, will dispense altogether (except for these sly parentheses) with all explanations, justifications, with all tricks (ah, subterfuges !) of self-presentment, rejoicing that for a moment I have secured reprieve from penmanship, as the friend who is typing for me will copy from the ten-year-old MS, which amuses me, may even amuse you, and shall anyway speak for itself :

PRAZ, POLAND.

July, 1913.

SCANDALMONGERING. SPYMONGERING

SADNESS. MADNESS.

HATE. FATE.

SCANDALMONGERING. Wherever two or three people are gathered together, they say ill of a third or fourth. If Praz is worse than anywhere else I have sojourned, it is a matter only of degree : in an English town or set, it would have taken rather longer to have heard so much. In ordered turns they take me into a corner, there in flavoursome whispers to catalogue the others’ sins and skeletons. Julian is the mildest and least specific ; says merely “ We are all scoundrels, the others quite as much as I am ; you know that Klementyna——”

and smiles and shrugs his shoulders. Karol Morawski has said ill of all the others except Weronika and (perhaps) Julian. Weronika speaks with violence of her mother the Generaless, her sister the Canoness, of Zwan their saint and hero, and of the little Sabbatyn ; of her brother she says : " He is criminally weak " ; of Morawski, " *I* like him, but they say he is vicious." Sebastyan reviles every one, tells me that Julian is a flay-flint, the service and the food the worst in Poland for a house of the size, and that the pack of them are ignorant, frowsty, jingo and contemptible. Have not yet had a heart-to-heart talk with the ' other party,' but should think from their faces they could easily out-slander the others. The scandalmongering here is intenser, though not more deliberately meant to wound than in gentle England, where in all classes, times and places, the Sovereign Slander is this : the smug slander that the other alone is the slanderer. ' I could forgive him (her) anything, you know, but not the scandals he (she) speaks, and how he (she) takes other people's characters away,' thus blandly, pharisaically, unforgivably, taking away his (hers). Here I have not heard this infamy once. They are better ; they believe what they say ; talk whole-hog scandal and admire and expect it in and from others, think to get as they give ; scarce slanderers at all.

SPYMONGERING. I know little yet, but feel that every one here spies on every one else, and knows that his fellows are so spying. Servants are in and out of my room all the time, rummaging everywhere. From what I have heard of the talk of ' our side ' (Julian, Karol and Weronika), they are kept hourly informed of the secret doings of ' the others ' (Zwan and Generaless and Canoness). Then to-night, when I came to write, not this special note, but earlier, my ordinary brief nightly diary, I found, after the word Zwan, every time it appeared in my five nights' notes, a cross + in red ink. I started, felt queer for a moment, heard some one—Zwan hypnotically ?—whispering in the empty room " You did it yourself, and are going mad to forget you did it."—" It's not true," I whispered back, " I have no red ink, and I know the crosses were not there last night ; or rather ' I ' think they were not."—" Are you sure ? "—" I am sure of nothing."

There are invisible spies too, from the other world. In the park to-day I cried aloud many 'grievous blasphemies,' verily thinking, as did Christian once, that they proceeded from my own mind, not at first perceiving that one of the wicked ones had whispered them in my ear.

That for the first two Words. Other impressions crowd on me, not aptly classed under my Chosen Six: which have served their purpose, as incantation for my pen.

For example, a certain other -MONGERING is much in evidence, that mongering for which you strip your own mother naked, and with pure savage hand tear her adulteries from between her breasts, and make her a wilderness, and slay her with thirst. Here words excel deeds, however, and if 'mongering' implies deeds rather than words, my term is not best chosen.—Not but what our French Emile is having the time of his life with the peasant girls, not but what Karol goes thrice weekly to the neighbouring country town; still, 'swinish conversation,' tho' unrhyming, would be nearer: I never heard so much, nor helped in so much, in so short a space in all my life before. More even than religion and philosophy, and as much even as politics (topics for *Sadness* and *Madness*), it is a staple subject; having this limitation that it can only function at certain times, *e.g.*, when no ladies are about (for smut the sexes segregate themselves), this virtue that almost alone it eliminates quarrelling. Where and when ever did men hate one another in moments of bawdy speech?—except as touching envy, if another outshine in narration or step in before you with your own triumphant tale. Such is our conversation here that, as I complacently declare, we ought all to be locked up; as we should be if we were poor and homeless, and in the land of my nativity, and in the street, with a Saturday night's rare glass within us to colour the sordid slums and send infrequent mirth from heart to tongue. "Obscene language," with clink to follow—if only we were poor enough and friendless. I remember that time in Walsall Police Court years ago when to a starved tattered wretch with gentle face the fat-jowled magistrate snapped "Fourteen days," hurrying off to luncheon, as I afterwards learnt, for an hour of good fare and filthy stories. The thin-lipped disapproval of such speech

which is the world's habitual mask, and his wife's, is a mask of hypocrisy and oftenest of guilt ; since it is held by the crowning majority of all men everywhere, of all creeds and classes and kinds.

Here at Praz, however, it seems that unclean speech and unclean lives go hand in hand. Yesterday evening we all sat for five solid hours, till the tide of the night was turning, exchanging stories. We played it as a round game, each of us telling in turn, the winner being he who could go on the longest. We put up a rouble each, the winner to gain the other three roubles. Julian and Morawski soon dropped out. For hours Sebastyan and I ran neck-and-neck ; then at last, after a count-out, Sebastyan had no new tale to hand, and I was declared the winner. Glad : as though I still had three or four prepared ahead, an hour earlier I had had full thirty, classified geographically and by subjects, and had been apprehensive, wrongly supposing that Seb's reserve stock was greater. Proud too : as I told all my tales in French, in which my *technical* vocabulary is weak. Bucked also : for three roubles equals 6s. 6d. And most of all interested, noting how many old stories of mine, told first by Seb, stealing a ribald march upon me, were yet different in quaint detail. Thus does traditional literature change by country and by race. (Some of the Slavonic variants were characteristic, and might stimulate scholars in slime to learned essay or sprightly monograph. In a well-known canine tale, the newly-married curate became, in Sebastyan's version, a newly-married pope ; and the ensemplary terrier a borzoi. The ' Something-wrong-aboard-ship ' classic of our nautical race became ' Something-wrong-in-the-regiment,' ship's captain and cabin-boy giving place to colonel and drummer.)

Yet for all my pleasure, and these solid grounds therefor, by moments hating myself, I hated the others and all their joy in this narrative debauch. They enjoyed it *too* much ; their eyes became piggy, their mouths hoggish. For them, I could see—them ! are not you morbider ?—such converse conjured up visions not mental only. Howbeit, it keeps them *sane*. Laughter, even lewd laughter, all laughter indeed except the devil's, is sane ; if it keeps man nearer the animal selves within,

it takes him further from the opposite pole, the terror-selves, the living Lunacy which, stripped of friendly flesh and covering laughter, is all he is, I am, you are. I hated to behold it, yet knew that this twinkling in Julian's eyes was better than fixed other-world stare.

After the story game, they cried that I must recite them some English 'limericks,' whose fame, it seemed, had crossed the Vistula. With Seb for travelling interpreter I took them a voyage round our world, riggish and rhyming. First we saw London Town and its Suburbs satyric, Ealing and Tottenham and Eltham, then the coast and counties of south England—Rye and Ryde, Buckingham and Devizes, Lundy and Penzance—next the Midlands that I have known Sodom but never at all unkind, laughing together at Birmingham and King's Norton, Leicester and Crewe. Away across the border to the lads and lassies of that foremost limerick land: Wick and Leith, Montrose and Dundee—what humblest burgh has not one song to offer? Over the sea, to each of the continents: to Algiers where, for all the Gallic conquests, in ribaldry still reigns the Dey; to Siam, ruled by the King his brother; to all sites and cities on the muck-minstrel's map.

My romances over, they began reality; mocked at purity, told through their sullied lives. "I have tried all the vices" bragged Sebastyan. "I began when I was twelve" laughed Karol. "It's a way of forgetting the world" said Julian. Well, let them live for their debauchery. Where is their country? Where can it ever be: with this effeminate upper class, and this poor toiling peasantry I see everywhere, enduring inhuman hours of labour? Perhaps Kosciuszko never said it eleven decades ago, but to-day anyway it is 'Finis Poloniae.' Perhaps. Are you so certain, you who've been in this country six days, not yet eleven decades, and are pontificating and prophesying mightily? Talk of the vaunting Sebs, the slanderous Polacks, the ruttish deacons! *Look to yourself.*

The INSECTS. Too trifling to note? No, for they are evil's emissaries, sent to buzz and tickle and sting my nerves into rags and help in the good work of making me good raw material for any inhuman pranks. The wasps (I killed ninety one this

forenoon with a knotted towel) and the bees I can combat, but the flies I cannot : these two rooms above the fruit garden and the kitchens are infested with them. They are innumerable, and aggressive, and maddening ; I am awoken at 5 o'clock or sooner by half-a-dozen of them investigating the edible excellence of my face. Last night they clustered on me, appearing in my rare moments of sleep—and nightmare—as scorpions.

They play their little part.

Then, amid this madness, there is the KINDNESS of them all. What do I like to eat, to drink ? How can they improve my room, soften my bed ; amuse me, please me ? Of course I cannot sufficiently repay them, except by agreeableness : the will to which is at least a wholesome habitant of my soul. Anyway I can teach them English ; tomorrow and the day after and the day after I will *force* lessons on to Julian, for all his protestations. (What race is as generous as this ?)

And ANGLOMANIA. ' Les Anglais ' are the rage here. Their games, their clothes, their language, their looks, their views, theoretically even their morals ; all are the rage. Superficial perhaps, but I think sincere ; not aired for my benefit just. The things they admire most are, however, the most transient things, *e.g.*, our SPORT MANIA. Julian has just had a tennis court made, and they are mad on the game. Of course I can't play. " What, an Englishman, and can't play tennis ? " cried Weronika, as though playing tennis were part of an Englishman's nature. How many Englishmen played it a hundred years ago, or will a hundred years hence ? It's about as English as ping-pong or diaboló ; and where, dear Weronika, are they ? The whole harsh tyranny of organised sport in our schools, as of organised show-games in our big towns, the raving about your house colours in one, about your record crowds (this last statistically amusing) in the other, is as new and as transitory—or save us !—and as characteristically un-English as it thinks, honestly thinks, it isn't. " But that's why you're such a successful race " went on Weronika. Useless to argue : to say that for the overwhelming part of our history

this team tyranny was not there. The Armada, at least, was not won in the swimming-baths of Eton. Give us the open air, and the plains and the hills, let us 'by all means' be healthy; but let us first be free. Their own sports, as I told them, riding and shooting and swimming, are better. Why borrow from England what she has that is bad? Do they want Poland studded with golf courses and tennis courts, and the peasants who won't play football ostracised or flogged like English schoolboys until they will, and 'mammoth gates' looking on while Lodz United do battle with Warsaw Wanderers?

Wanderer I—how far have I ranted from this house, these people. Wanderer, too, from realities: as if any vice, especially one as trifling as the sport-fever, could, where even Puritanism has failed, take our goodness and flavour away, leave us other than the salt of the earth.

God Save the King.

(Here I got up, stood to attention, and sang through the National Anthem.)

SADNESS: MADNESS: HATE: FATE. I'll take these four chief words together, which intertwine and overlap. Almost all in this chateau are wretched, as almost all are mad; they hate; they fear; they know they are insect-playthings on a wheel. Unlike the average English, though not the God-haunted English, or the poet English, they know the world *isn't there*. Despite the differences of race, and phrase, and caste, they are most like the Lord's children my childhood knew: Brother Julian and Brother Sebastyan and Leading-Brother Zwan and Sister Tanska, I knew you all years ago! Then I called you, and shall call you avengingly in the book I hope one day to write, Count Dodderidge and Count Traies and Saint Simeon Greeber and Generaless Jael. These princely Poles are as unhappy as those others, and as mad; even more consciously too, more detachedly from this-world realities. They are as fatalist; more despairingly too, since the Brethren held their doctrine of predestination, predamning, as true only for *others*. The more wonted English, the merry melancholy English of Shakespeare or Shropshire Lad or 'Igh

Street Saturday night, into whose hearts neither Calvin nor cruelty has entered, are not so afraid of fate, so assured of its annihilations for themselves or for others. They do not know what these mad-eyed Poles know. They are better folk maybe, fuller of common sense and simple kindness, readier for larks and laughter and to do good turns to their neighbours : even on the edge of the abyss, down which man falls for ever. *For they do not know that it is there.*

And I, sent east to belong to these Polacks, though I have been here not a week, am already part of them. Why, I should find it hard to explain, save thus : that my particular sort of madness suits their particular sort of madness. And in five days they have made me madder, and I they. And sadder. For all the fun and the food and the flippancy and the frippery (Swinburne still rules you), for all the cheeringness of getting in five hours' Schools-work (and I must make it six, to have any chance of a good degree), I am weary here and unhappy, and eaten by mad desire to do something that would give me, if only a breath of it, ecstasy ; if only for an instant, the ravishment of God. I so want it—gustation of the Spouse—partly because in tasting it I may win annihilation and be saved from the terrors sketched out for me in this land ; chiefly for its own sake, its joy. And at night this do I to get it : by hard striving I conjure up my εὐχαι of the face of the Redeemer, fix it on the pillow, where it shines luminous in the blackness, and then bury my face, and kiss, and kiss ; and get near, ever nearer, the ecstasy, but always fall short one step from the zenithal moment when it turns to ached-for Eternal Death.

In the morning, of course, I am almost quite spent ; and these Poles, up pale from their sister-nights, are in like-minded mood. They fear. We fear. Lies are impossible, for we see the hateful truth in each other's eyes. Everything is wrong—or is it right, and elsewhere wrong ? Julian is under other-world influence, exercised chiefly by Zwan, but also by unwilling me, and knows it ; and I shall be under Zwan, and know it. Park and palace and people are filled with unuttered screams. Now, as I write, it is late and the unilluminated corners of the room are peopled, and I dare not look up from the paper, lest those shapes that are waiting

there should loom and tower and pounce forward with Apollyon-faces and fierce claws and tear out my heart and fling it into depths of hell-fire. It is terror, and the terror is turning to madness. Save, Lord, oh save, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul ! Hide the face from me, the face on the paper before me, clear and alive, the face of my father. I have never seen you, though you are still, they say, in the world ; relatives have told me you are ' strange ' and ' peculiar,' that you have ' wild eyes.' A month ago I saw for the first time your photograph, taken when you were twentyone, my age. Sickness got me, for tho' there were differences—of surface, not soul, *e.g.*, it was proud and handsome, which mine is not—yet it was MY OWN FACE, not similar, but my own. A spasm of mingled love and fear went through me. You and I were one, alive in different bodies. You brought me to the brink : of understanding what my soul is, how it is mine, and yours-my-father's, and every one's ; how it is no soul at all, how there is no soul, but only a clockwork brain, which is going faster and faster, whirling through memories that are cruel and infinite, that go back for ever till they sear me like red-hot irons and I scream aloud at the beginning of time, through eternal futures and racing fears, through megalomanias and abasements ; ticking, ticking away, from everlasting to everlasting, running through words and visions, ever faster and faster ; now it is saying poetry, turning words thro' my head, and I am mouthing aloud as I scribble :

The herds of kings and their hosts and the flocks of the high
priests bow

To a master whose face is a ghost's ; O thou that wast God,
is it thou ?

Ah, thou that darkenest heaven—ah, thou that bringest a
sword—

By the crimes of thy hands unforgiven they beseech thee to
hear them, O Lord. . . .

Nay, cry on him then till he shew you a sign, till he lift up a
rod ;

Hath he made out the nations to know him of old if indeed he
be God ?

Cry aloud ; for your God is a God and a Saviour ; cry,
make yourselves lean ;

Is he drunk or asleep, that the rod of his wrath is unfelt and
unseen ?

“ God ! ” I shout, blaspheming, “ Are you drunk ? ” and

avenging shapes close in from each corner, and "Ah Lord, forgive, forgive——"

I have fainted? My pen and brain ran away with me to Hell. No, don't write that, or you'll be hurried there again. Keep off reality; keep off terror. Keep off what the Devil is tempting your pen to write as to the PROPHECY: soon enough it will pounce for fulfilment.

Write what you set out to write: your impressions of the others and their talk. Fill the four or five remaining pages of this exercise-book, then stop.

Politics should be safe: tho' here too all is sadness and madness, and hate and fate. Poland has the most dolorous story of any nation. Poland is the greatest of all the peoples. Poland loathes the world: Russia and Prussia and Austria who tore her to bits, and the others who looked on consenting. Poland can never rise from the dead; not only the armed force of the three Empires, but the cruel will of the three Fates, is against her. Sometimes they talk sense, and then things come to this: All Poles hope for an ultimate realisation of their nationality, a one-day re-creation of the Polish State. Most do not expect it. The most serious hopes at the present day are based on the possibilities which would follow a dissolution of the Hapsburg Empire: a thinkable event, but no more. Five to one against, thinks Julian; a hundred to one, think I. One great vague reason why one feels Polish nationality must somehow one day be realised consists in the number of Poles in existence, say 25 millions, thus much the largest people with no native state of their own (the 10 million Czechs come next, I think); Julian stresses this, tho' I think he's inclined to overrate the [word illegible: *statistical* perhaps?] argument, and to discount the plain-facts-of-the-political-situation aspect, and, not unnaturally, the national-failings-of-the-Poles argument. He is also quite barmy in his incessant talk of a Great War, soon to break out, some time next year (!) or 1915, with France and Russia fighting on one side, Germany and Austria on the other. If the war lasted, both sides would bid for Polish support. Which side should Poland, laid waste by the armies of both, speak and decide for? For Austria, say Julian and Weronika; who, in victory, would

annex Russian Poland and treat it as decently as of late she has treated her own Galician slice : unless Germany, her more powerful ally, forbade her and took herself the lion's share of Congress Poland. For Russia, says the Generaless ; who, in beating the Austro-German Allies, would annex both Posnania and Galicia and thus unite under one sceptre all Poles. Gradually Russia will become more liberal, will grant " Ome Rûle," and Poland, under the friendly ægis of her great sister, will achieve virtual nationhood once again. " Her great sister ! " retorts Weronika. " Through a century we have been tortured by the Asiatic savages who call themselves Russia." And as Poles have ever done, they fall to quarrelling among themselves. And I, who smugly note it, forget that never a brave nation could be more cruelly placed between her foes.

Her foes ? Have *I* none ? My *pesymizm*, for which Julian and Weronika rate me—not that. This wretched worsening cold I picked up in Breslau, that remains a German legacy making me headachey and out-of-sorts, and ruining all *joie-de-vivre*—not that. No, you whosoever you are, you cannot stop my writing it—*my own ill soul*, whose fate will be accomplished, whose HARVEST gathered— As again my pen, ghoulish, seeks to write of the PROPHECY, a cloud looms up and fills all that roadway of my brain, and drives me back ; and the Lord I hear calling to me out of the cloud, saying " Keep off. Return to thy unharmed Words."

Four Words. Sebastyan, like Poland, personifies them. Tho' for all his degenerateness [sic] and wretchedness and megalomania, I think he is further from the Central Madness than the others, than Generaless and Julian and dwarf. Seb the Sane ! I see too that, as Morawski told me, he is further also from the central this-world battle raging here.

As to this latter, I haven't yet had time to decide for myself as to the accuracy of Karol Morawski's account of things or the justice of his judgments. Broadly, I think he's right. From what Weronika has told me also, the old lady's WILL is, as in a good old-fashioned story, the gage of battle. She is immensely rich. I think it's true that ' the other side ' get at

her through religion, just as Julian and much more Weronika, tho' they'd never admit it, truckle to her in politics, noising into her willing ears a xenophobe patriotism that no doubt sincerely animates them, exploiting also an affection they no doubt sincerely feel. Money, it's all a question of money, says Karol. Is it? Rather, I think, as one by one I summon their faces before me and peer into their eyes, it's Happiness, the Blue Bird, they are all seeking, and Money only as golden birdlime to make him prisoner. Julian wants peace. Weronika wants love, and a man, and the position of a married woman, and children. Morawski wants comfort, a good time, plenty of women and plenty of food, well-made bodies and well-fed faces around him. Wretched Seb wants affection and admiration, with fine clothes and fine cars and all other things that help to secure them. Grimalkin seeks the wreaking of spites, the crunching of enemy bones; the Generaless, Love, abasing, flawless, unplumbable. Zwan?—into those eyes I do not look. Power, it must be: over death, to checkmate it, or over life, more terrible, to blot it out for ever.

And Money will buy most of these things, or they think it will. So they fight over the decaying body of the ancient Grandmother: what mockery of the principle of personal freedom that such an old vegetable should have the right to make a will! I find I have come at the moment of crisis, and may see the battle's end, since (1) she has, according to the doctors, at most three months to live; (2) Julian's return home has precipitated matters. The ancient has announced, says Weronika, that she will make but one will more, which shall be the last one, and that at the moment when Death has entered the room.

And her idea of happiness, the Vegetable's? I think: Heaven for herself in the next world, and for Poland in this. Money bequeathed to one party might help her win the first, to the other party the second. The Almighty Rouble. How can she hesitate? Surely Zwan must win. I watch her at table, dribbling away; in twichild; half-dead, half-blind. Yet, as of old when an Amazon, she is all aware of the battle, the battle of wills, her Will and her will; all their wills. She knows their hopes, the hopes of those she loves and of those she more wildly hates. They are two rows of vultures, waiting

till the last heart-beat is silent. She splashes her spoon into her soup and chuckles aloud to herself. She is cunning and a teaser and will keep them in suspense till the ultimate hour. She is one hundred years old come September, and may live, oh Queen, for ever.

She is the cleverest living Pole.

CHAPTER XI: POLISH MOTHER, POLISH SAINT, POLISH GRANDMOTHER

Once Julian and Weronika, Karol and Sebastyan were away the whole day at a neighbouring chateau ; for the first time I found myself alone at table with ' the others.'

Zwan sat opposite me and stared ; the Canoness made a first flickering effort to be agreeable ; the Generaless was all graciousness and angular gush. In the middle of a ' How I've always admired England ' and ' I've always wished to know an Englishman really well ' oration, she squeezed in casually, too casually : " Why we hardly know you at all yet ! You must come and spend the afternoon in my apartments." Zwan and the Canoness pretended they were not looking at me to see how I took it.

" Thank you, I will ; it's very kind of you," I replied, as though it were a perfectly ordinary sort of invitation. (" Which perhaps, you fool, it is.")

After dinner, and as soon as the Sabbatyn had shepherded the Grandmother away to her quarters, the Generaless, who clearly did not want the latter to see whither I was being decoyed, led me away to hers ; Zwan and Grimalkin having preceded us.

I followed her upstairs into a strange and enormous room, which had six or eight large windows. These, however, were garnished with fusty curtains ; opacular, so the light was dim. They were also, I surmised, rarely opened : there was a staleness and a stuffiness, and a smell. The walls were hung with threadbare tapestries and bristled with crucifixes and devotional pictures. Three or four hounds sprawled in different parts of the room, gnawing at bones. They growled as I came in. Here and there were enamelled dishes of dogs' food and canine drinking-bowls. Bones and bits of meat and cabbage were strewn on the carpet, and there was evidence that the sanitary arrangements for these pets were less complete than

the dietetic. In a crucifix-encircled cage against the wall screeched a pink cockatoo.

In one corner of the room a barricade of screens, through a break in which I saw Zwan on a stool, peering, made a kind of little cubicle apart, a saint's cell. Opposite, in a similar cubicle, the Canoness sat sewing ; and eavesdropping.

The Generaless took me over to what was evidently her own particular, though unscreened, corner of the room, near a table thick with framed photos of husbands, the which she described to me, their faces and their bodies, their pedigrees, their passions and their pasts ; praised them in voluble sequence, yet faintly, damning the three. Even Tanski, the beloved General—who, if (most unfairly) he had not been deemed too old for a command, would by his superlative knowledge of the art of war have forced a far different ending to the Manchurian campaign—even Tanski knew nothing of the art of love. While as to the other two——.

Children were even less satisfactory. She had borne three, they were her flesh and blood ; yet were not hers, mind and soul—above all soul—as God had meant them to be. She had given them life. They had given her nothing in return : “ . . . Weronika has always eluded me. As a baby I could see she was trying to escape my mother's love ; with her tiny mouth she dodged my kisses. Julian, son of my womb, is kinder, but more cowardly ; knowing my need, fearing it, he hides from me abroad. Why even Klementyna ” she whispered “ is not of my soul, as of my body. She gives me an obedience that flatters me, pleases me, but not the love my heart cries for. No one gives that ! No one gives that ! ” and she produced a cambric handkerchief, and dabbed her eyes and cheeks. Powder moistened and caked.

Little soft steps behind us, and Grimalkin the Eavesdropper—lured by ‘ Why even Klementyna ’—was upon us.

“ Mother, how dare you ! I who have stood by you always ! And contemptuous abuse of me to a foreigner is all my reward. What you always cry at your children, I cry at you : Ingrate, cruel one ! ”

“ I cruel ? God ! ” gasped the Generaless. “ What about your ungracious, nay your selfish conduct last week, when you refused to drive over with me to poor old Countess N.'s for

the afternoon?—merely, I suppose ” (witheringly) “ because it wasn’t a formal invitation to a dinner-party, merely because Countess N. is as poor as a hen, merely because she’s a dear friend of mine——”

“ You beetle ! Daring to imply I only go anywhere with you when there’s a first-class dinner to be eaten.”

“ I implied no such thing.”

“ You did, you know you did. You stressed the word ‘ dinner ’ in a specially sneering way.”

“ You lie ! You lie like a puller-out of teeth ! It was only ‘ formal ’ I stressed, and I meant that, and it was true ; and, as I said, it was ungracious, it was selfish. When I remember all the poor dear Countess’ poor dear husband did for you when you were a little girl ”—she nodded her head sanctimoniously, delighted to have found a righteous reason to substitute for the real one—“ and when I remember how lonely the poor dear Countess is ! It is not on account of myself I am grieved with you, but only for *her*.”

“ Fudge ! You are not angry, mother dear, for any such hypocritical reason at all, but merely angry because you started to be angry and have got to go on somehow——”

“ And you are angry because what I said got home——”

“ And ‘ dinner ’ I tell you was the word you stressed, and I call it hateful and vile to try to make out that I only go with you to your friends according as to whether they have a good chef or not. It’s unforgivable making me out such a mean and low creature, when after all it’s I who have always——”

“ I didn’t make it out, I didn’t ! In any case, all that is unimportant now compared to the fact that you have called the mother who bore you a beetle. Is that forgivable ? ”

“ Well you——”

“ Listen, I say ! It’s far worse than anything I said. Ungracious and selfish are the two words I used. *They* were mild and *they* were true——”

“ And *they* were said deliberately to wound, hee ! hee ! and besides—the difference is you meant them, while I didn’t mean ‘ beetle.’ Although I said the worst word, you who meant yours were really worse. Do you agree that you were worse——? ”

“ Agree ! Fine days these latter days of ours ! A mother

must put herself beneath her daughter ; must grovel before her daughter, must grovel ! Must grovel ! No, rather would I grovel before God," and shaking with rage and hysteria, she plumped down on her bony knees, knee'd her way a few yards across the floor to a crucifix, and began loudly praying for her daughter's soul and moaning " No one gives that ! No one gives that ! "

The Canoness fled to her screens.

The moment she was out of sight, though never (I fear) hearing, the Generaless rose to her feet, lighted a cigarette and smiled at me as though nothing had happened.

Then she began moving gauntly to and fro round the table of husbandly photographs. I watched her flickering on the unsteady ledge between tragedy and farce. She was a queen of both ; with her towering height, clothes-horse frame, flaxen wig, powdered wrinkled face, ostrich-feather fan and black velvet robe, was a Wagnerian goddess strayed into a musty French operette.

" Is your mother alive ? " she asked suddenly.

" No. She died when I was born."

" *Pauvre !* Would you love her if she were alive ? "

" I love her now, although she is dead." (' Change *although* to *because* ' one within me sneered.)

" How much ? As much as you will love your wife ? "

" More, I think. I'm not sure."

" Do you kiss her ? "

" Every night, always ; always."

The repeated word, being uttered by sentimentality, ousting sincerity, had almost fordone me ; I saw the Generaless loom nearer, meltingly, ready to smarm, to slobber ; but saved myself just in time by crying " Of course I don't, of course I don't ; I only said it in fun " ; by lying my mother away.

She had drawn a blank this time. She flopped down in her chair, and to work off her passion—now turned to anger—on to someone, cursed at her servant near : " *Félo !* The heat ! Why aren't you fanning me ? "

The lime branch stirred the fug, wafted new hope into her heart.

" Let us speak frankly (*franchement*)"—in all times and tongues the opening for speeches that are nearly frank, but

not quite, not quite—"I'd like to talk to you about my son, as you were so eager to confide in me about your mother. Although you've been here for so short a time, I know that you've a great influence over him. I say so quite openly" she added, making a virtue of necessity, "and," making a necessity of virtue, "I maintain that one should always play with all one's cards on the table; it's the only way. Sergius (Zwan) too has watched, and thinks you already have more influence over him, more power—you know what I mean—than has anyone else. For he looks into your eyes: while into Sergius' he daren't; and if he looked into mine it would not matter; he would see only eyes, not windows through which my sad love is looking. You *have* him. What I want you to do is this: look at him, hard, and tell him to love me."

"You mean I'm to use hypnotic power you think I've got over your son to influence his relations with you?"

"It would be good use of a power that is good or bad according to how it is used."

"And supposing I had this power, and succeeded, would a love thus artificially stimulated satisfy you, appease you?"

"If it were love, what matter how engendered? I prayed to God to change his heart; He replied that He would grant my prayer: soon. He whispered it to me at Mass a few weeks back. As soon as I saw you I knew that you were His vehicle." (Not the first, I mused, you've thought vehicular.) "It is God, acting through you, Who will send Julian sobbing to my heart. Do you call God artificial?"

"I too shall pray," I replied, "and then I'll know."

"But are you a Catholic?"

"Protestants pray."

Was Tanska right? Ever since the Scotch body's 'Keep away!' I had been frightened of myself; of my power over others, of others' power over me. With what inevitability, against which my own will could have done nothing, I had turned the tables against Nellie. And how I had played on Julian, and been as an open book to the freemason's eye of Zwan, and raised his jealousy. And now the Generaless knew it and meant to use her knowledge, and use me. To win back a son's love, it seemed; not to win gold.

That no doubt was the dwarf's job.

"I must leave you now," she said, "I always lie down for an hour in the afternoon. But Sergius would like to have a talk with you, I know."

Pontifically she ushered me in through his screens : *du côté de chez Zwan*.

He motioned me to sit down on a little milking-stool near his own, smiled politely, said nothing at all. We sat in silence. I gazed at a Madonna on the wall, he at his tiny feet. The silence stayed. He was seeking to wear me down, cow me into awkward first speech. I gathered my courage and set to—praying, staring—silently to outfight him.

I won. He spoke first. I was streaming with sweat ; the fight had been hard.

"I'm not angry," he began in a voice sane and friendly, for all its emasculate trill. "You've less power and less knowledge than I, but more will. Let us be friends."

I took his proffered tiny claw.

"Do you despise the things of this world ?" he asked, this Plymouth-Brother Polish dwarf.

"Not enough."

"Wealth, for instance ?"

"I've never had any ; I don't know what it's like well enough to despise it. With things, like people, you need to know them to despise them.

"Or not to despise them. For instance, you despised me less than a minute ago ?"

"Yes."

As to the others, you will see. They're all of them hunting after childish things, you know. A big position in the countryside, more influence than their neighbours, a house in Paris or Vienna, women, a son's love, a future for Poland. Patriotism, faugh ! That is the vainest. Living in God alone matters. Religion is greater than patriotism, God than country : you believe that ?"

"Yes."

"Well, say so to other people."

I started. His voice, and self, had changed. In a second he had turned from mystic to intriguer, had swerved from that

telepathic talking he seemed to be *taking out of me* into a calculated 'useful remark' with which my own thoughts, whereby I now knew I could check him, had nothing to do. A Zwan with an eye on the main chance had for a second elbowed Other-Zwan aside, and given me *my* chance.

"Other people? You mean the Grandmother, for instance"; sneering magnificently.

He flushed, acknowledging his fault; then simply changed back. There was no question of sincerity or insincerity; only a question of selves.

"To be a friend of God's, that is the one aim, to get back to Him, be again part of His soul and body. I try, but am a beast and sinful, so I have far—perhaps weeks, perhaps worlds—to go. I am a lost part of Him. So are you. So is everyone. What is it to be a Pole, or a German, or a Russian? It is false to say I am pro-Russian. I am against the anti-Russians, that is all. I hate only hate——"

At these four words out of Zwan's mouth I apprehended, mystically, that it was I who had said them, so smiled as I replied to myself "I also." Then I went on: "But perhaps it is no good, and there will always be hate; our souls may run always midway between hate and war on the one hand, and peace and love on the other. I fear so, for there's a reason. It's because—no, I've forgotten the reason, though I saw it a trice ago—it's because——"

"Because—because——" he droned, to help me.

"I have it. Because the earth we're part of runs always midway in the heavens between Mars and Venus."

"Always, you think? You think the heavens are unchanging, that we shall for ever keep the same distance from the other worlds? Ask the astronomers. No: we can get nearer to the Morning Star, and shall; as we learn to hate only haters, anti-Poles and anti-Russians alike, and to love all else. I love poor Russia as I love the whole world . . ."

My fear and dislike of him were yielding each instant now. I knew that it was I who was really talking, though my lips did not move; that he, by reason of the power he had, was pulling my thoughts out of me and placing them in his own mouth, taking them for his own. Each word, as he said it, was the word my mouth would have said if it had moved;

my thoughts were his ; he had possession of them and of me.

Or I of him ? In Heaven, recounts one of the few children of men who have been there and returned to earth to tell us of its mysteries, speech cannot cloak nor hinder thought ; lying is not possible, nor incomprehension ; for speech is there from thought itself ; it is Thought speaking ; there is a general wordless communication of thought. Our state was similar, but not identical ; for between us there was still the barrier (or screen) of words.

Or I of him ? No ! the one from whose mouth the words came was master. Then I would be master. I would see whether, as that evening with Nellie, it would work the other way.

"Stop !" I broke in. Zwan twined and shrank ; the world was in me, upon me ; and the power had passed to me.

Of what I said, the words I found in Zwan's heart, I have no remembrance.

Later we drank tea together and talked normally enough ; laughing at Sebastyan, scandalmongering.

"It was you who wrote the red-ink crosses in my journal ?" I found myself enquiring as easily as I might have asked of an Oxford friend, 'It was you who were looking for me this morning ?' "Why ?"

"With my knowledge that you were writing about me, and I knew it from your first day, you yourself would have done the same, would you not ? Have done it already, I seem to see, seem to see, seem to see. . . . You are creeping upstairs when all are away, opening a friend's secret book, writing three words in blue chalk, four words, foreign words I do not understand—translate them, tell me !—he returns, he is dark-haired, the pale face flushes as he reads the words——"

"No, no !" I cried, crimson as I *remembered* this deed of mine ; though I had never done it, nor aught resembling it, "It's not true,"

"Then it will be. Have done it in the past, will do it in the future : what difference is there ? It is the same. Time, what a fool's word. Tense, what a lie. I see you are telling the truth, so 'will do it,' would be nearer than 'have done it'

in the silly speech of men. It's there : I see, I see. Translate the four words."

"Blessed are the merciful," I heard my lips saying, as I read, from a spirit book before me, my azure comment yet unpenned, scrawled across merciless diatribe yet unwritten, secret revenge for small unkindness yet uncommitted, hid in Balliol cupboard yet unforced. For an infinite second an Oxford face loomed before me. "Thank you," I added, would-be jauntily, "it's pleasant to know which friends' diaries are Emmanuel-burdened and -unburdened and -annotated. And now that we're friends, you'll promise to tamper no more with mine?"

"Not 'now that we're friends,' but for another reason. Don't think that those periods of other-world consciousness leave no trace. What you passed to me——"

"What was it?"

"Ah! You must learn to keep your ordinary self awake and alive as simultaneously with the other as you can. It needs prayer and long practice, and is a weariness to the flesh. But try. As I said, all that you passed to me will stick. So also what I passed to you will stick : for instance, the total and magical apprehension of the farce and folly of patriotism. *You* talked about that too—the certainty that other loyalties are better. And for all your lingering sneers, your not quite silent suspicion that I'm a fraud, or an evil spirit, for all your still unsettled doubts as to Grannie's Will, yet you will find yourself, and soon——"

"When?"

"To-day—pleading to the old she-wolf herself the cause of religion against patriotism and its implication of a 'Zwan heritage' as against a Julian one. You will, you will! I've wound you up. You'll see."

Zwan had won.

But was this all the evil he had to do me? For if so, fulfilment held not the howling terror of Lichfield prophecy. But that was not possible, I knew, seeing again with a shiver Quince's face, living again the moments. Or, likelier, was not to-day mere trickery, to lure me into confidence? Too much had come true for terror also not to find his counterpart in fact. Here was dwarf; here was Zz . . . Zw . . .

Only for a moment, remembering Morawski's tale of Bethlehem the half-brother, who lived in south-west Poland, nearer the Line, and persuading myself that Zwan, for all he was a sprite, was not the devil who had beckoned me east, did I consider the possibility of there being an ultimate, eviller goal than Praz. All evidences were against such a notion, or it was a notion telepathised by Zwan to put me off my guard, and I dismissed it.

Nor with Grandmother, till this day, had I really spoken. At table I could not always cope with her deafness, while her own speech was too thick with food and age to be easily intelligible to a novice.

Once indeed, on the verandah one afternoon, she had made a friendly advance on the subject of English literature.

"Oh, I've read English books," I understood her stickily to boast, "though in French translations. Two I remember specially. Famous books they were." The Sabbatyn and Weronika interpreted what I could not catch. "But it's fifty years since I read them. I forget the names." She tunnelled in her ancient memory, moistened her thick grey lips. "One was Leal-Poot" (that was the sound she made), "the other was La Case de l'Oncle Georges."

"I've never heard of them," I bawled, noise enabling me the better to conceal my conviction that her two 'famous books' were in all probability long-forgotten trash.

"Leal-Poot is about dwarfs, Oncle Georges about dark men."

Dwarfs ; gipsies.

She was not saying it, was not saying it. Zwan had tinkered with my hearing, bewitched me till I could hear only the madnesses in my own brain.

"Dwarfs. Dark men," repeated Weronika, sane, pretty and desirable. Then not hallucination, but daft coincidence - or the other.

"You can't have read much," said Grandmother. "These two books almost every one has read. And every one has *heard* of them."

So, indeed, they have ; but it took me a day to divine that Leal-Poot was Lilliput and Lilliput Gulliver's Travels, to find

that *case* meant cabin and that Uncle ' Georges ' should have been ' Tom.'

This latter emendation I shouted at dinner next day. " Non, *non*, NON ! La Case de l'Oncle *Georges*." Eighty years divided us ; generously, gallantly, I decided not to insist.

A dark saying had proved not dark at all. The trifling incident cheered me.

Apart from this literary chat—and brief answers to such questions as ' How old are you ? ', ' Are you married ? ', ' Have you any children ? ', ' Are you still at school ? ', ' Do you like Poland ? ', ' Will England back up Napoleon and help us ? ', ' What says Pal-mayor-stone ? '—I had, however, had no dealings with the Countess Ostowska.

It was about five o'clock when I left the Generaless' room. The others had not yet returned ; the great dining-room was silent, the day still and sultry. I sat down to the piano, glad of a chance to strum unmocked. Finding the *Vrai Tango Argentin* open before me, I set to and picked out the barbarous air, filling in with a ' harmonisation ' of my own deplorable invention. Against the sadness which hovered, my tune rang tinselled and incongruous ; I had to stop in the middle of a bar, and turn, as of old, to tunes godlier. " Play the hymns called for by Quince and Nellie," I was whispering, and I obeyed myself, and strummed through *Nearer my God to Thee*, and *Shall we gather at the River ?*, and *Bringing in the Sheaves*, seeing around me the Staffordshire-Brummagem faces, hearing the voices, slipping away. . . .

I broke off even more sharply than from the *Tango*, but the moment I stopped there fell an ill silence, and I knew I must fight it with new noise, noise unfraught with memories. Vivace, crescendo, I vamped through a dozen livelier canticles : *Come ye that love the Lord ; Beulah Land ; One by one the Pilgrims*——. At last in the great tidal discords of *God the All-Terrible*, to the tune of the Russian National Anthem, my voice and vamping found total safety and pleasure alike.

I heard a sound ; looked up. The old one was coming through the curtains from the hall, her yellow-grey face flavescent with rage, her eyes streaming, her mouth contorted ;

coming swiftly, avengingly, towards *me*, her stick tap-tapping across the great space of floor, her intentions unaccountably, unmistakably, evil.

I shrank away a little as she came near, but for courage went on playing.

"*Cesse !*" she cried brutally, and clawed my hands from the keyboard. I obeyed, clasped my hands feebly between my knees, edged further away.

"Listen, listen !" and for a long strange moment she held forth. Two feet from cowed listener on stool, she supported herself against the piano-end, waving her stick with her free arm. At first her speech was thick and hard to interpret, but as she went on the old voice found a hoarse and sombre power. Beyond her trembled the wretched Sabbatyn, wringing her hands, not daring to interrupt, scarce daring to listen.

"Young man, young Englishman, that is the third time, third time in my hundred years of life, I have listened to that foulness. I was out in the hall, it struck my ears, cut me like a knife, set my old blood, my old blood tingling, and brought before my eyes the other two times. The other two times. The first time. The 'thirty-one.' I served under Glowacki, the chief of the Reapers. I was eighteen, one of the first of his Amazons. I expect the little babies have told you : Julian ; no, Julian's father. We reaped the Russians down ; with scythe, with sickle. We killed them, drove them back. Now it is they who come on, we fall back, the Muscovites are upon us, they trample. 'Ah, the Amazons !' their general is shouting, a brute six foot and a half, black beard and sottish face. 'Shoot every one of them, turn the cannon on them ! No mercy ! No prisoners ! Slice off the darlings' breasts !' Some of the Russian officers—there are good Russians—there was a gentle-faced young lieutenant near me, always when I have prayed God to punish Russia, I have prayed for the repose of his soul—some of them murmured to each other. 'General' pleaded the young lieutenant, and others joined in. 'Silence !' the savage shouted, 'The first to argue shall be flogged to death !' The firing began, the cannon poured forth grape-shot, my ears were filled with din and groaning, my lips prayed for death. God willed otherwise ; I was not worthy to die for Poland."

Memory failed her for a moment ; she mumbled, drivelled : " What was I coming to, coming to ? Ah, the tune ! Yes ; eight of us were left alive. Four women, four men. They stood us up in front of the general, with the bodies of our men and women dead and dying around us, our ankles in blood. They flogged us, tore our casquettes from our heads, set three trumpeters, as near as man to wife, to stand against us, to blare into our ears, above the groans of the dying girls and boys, that tune of blood you dared to play. Bah !——"

She crashed down on the keyboard with her stick.

" Then, then——. I escaped. I married. But loved always my country more than my man. It is long ago. The long dark years of defeat. Our dear country overrun by Kalmucks and Jews, and Samoyedes and Tartars and Mongols, sinking beneath the horizon. They stole our lands, confiscated our goods, sent us to Siberia, kidnapped the little children to fight in the Russian wars. Only the good priests kept alive our faith in God and our country. So at last they turned on the priests, flung them out of our churches, placed in their stead soldiers and lousy popes. The Samoderjetz issued his *Vae Victis* from St. Petersburg. . . . Then at last our poor people rose again : the '63. I was too old to fight, though it is fifty years ago, but I saw the end. From a window in the Square at Warsaw, facing the palace. My brother Karol, little Julian's uncle—no, great-uncle—was one of the crowd that stood in the snow and sang our national hymn."

She croaked a few bars, nodded her head to and fro. Her eyes were closed, surveying the fifty-year old butchery, peering through the frosted window.

" Prince Gortschakoff burst into fury. ' Still singing that traitor tune ? Mow them down. Mow them down,' and the cannon spoke, and I wished I were down with Karol, and the horses' hoofs trampled on the children, and the air was bright with flame and loud with firing and the ground as I stared black and white and crimson : mud and snow and blood. Dear Karol fell, and waved Goodbye to me with his arm. Still I hear them singing, above all the din, but fainter, and fainter ; then one pitiful voice alone ; then silence. I stared ; watched the second death of Poland. Gortschakoff came to the window ; broke off his game of whist, they say, when the

last voice faltered ; grinned, went back to his game ; though he died soon after, as God knows, in black agonies, ha, ha ! First sent word to his master, the yellow Tsar : “ ‘ Order, order ’—what was it ? ”

“ Order reigns in Warsaw.”

“ That’s it. And sent his trumpeters to stand among the dead and play your lovely tune. Come along, come along ! ” She poked me with her stick. “ Let’s have it ! ”

I kept my hands tightly clasped.

“ You will not ? You will not play it again ? You are right ! It shall never be played in Poland again. But our hymn will sound in the ears of their dying. We will mow them down as they have mowed us. Russia will taste what we have tasted, horror and tortures and death, the abomination of desolation, the second death. And soon ! Hear what I tell you : soon ! And Poland the vulture will be there to croak their dear hymn in their starving bleeding ears——”

She cackled, flapped her black arms as though wings, and fell back half-fainting in the Sabbatyn’s arms.

I was crying. I loved her, pitied her, adored her. Yet impulse stronger than these stood me up, and I went to her and said—like a prophet ? like a prig ?—“ It is wrong, wrong. You must forgive. Because Russia has trod cruelly on Poland, Poland will never find salvation by seeking to tread cruelly on Russia. Revenge is evil. If a country seeks its own soul, it will lose it. It will win it, as Poland one day will, only if for ever and for ever it forgives——”

“ Dear me ! ” she snarled, the yellow face as live as before, but uglier. “ Here speaks *Mister* Saint Zwan. You aren’t an Englishman, little boy, you’re one of those new machines that talk with a human voice, a—a——”

“ Gramophone.”

“ That’s the word. Pitiful wretch ! Come along, Gramophone, let’s have your tune,” and she struck me across the back with her stick and slobbered so madly that in fear more for her than for myself I began again the fatal air that had kindled those ancient fires.

At once the bag of bones straightened, heightened, stiffened ; an Amazon ghost of eighty years ago. She slung her stick over her shoulder as though a rifle, and strode martially—

left, right ! left, right !—round the dining-table, croaking words, I suppose Russian, in a bitter horrible voice, laughing and fleering, moaning and weeping as she marched ; fearful Sabbatyn scuttling after, lest, staffless, she should fall.

“ Last verse ” she cried, and as I played now goose-stepped a last time round the table, then towards the door.

At the door she turned ; saluted mockingly.

“ Damn ! Bloody ! ” she screamed in pitiful English, and fainted on the floor.

CHAPTER XII: THE COSSACKS ARE COMING !

At supper that evening Grandmother Ostowska seemed none the worse, and ate as mightily as usual. The others, back from their outing, appeared to notice nothing, though all were skilled noticers of Grandmamma's health, scanning her face each meal-time with fear, or hope. Apart from a certain redness round the gleaming eyes and little Sabbatyn's anxiety lest notice they should, there was perhaps not much to notice.

In a sense I was playing a double game now. I liked better Julian and Karol and Weronika. They were my friends. My sympathies and hopes were theirs. In any row or rumpus I should have stood with them. And yet—— There was a doubt. Deeper down I knew my affinities with Tanska and Zwan. In a row on this earth I should side with the others. But in heaven ; or hell ?

I said little to Julian about my talks with those two, mentioning merely, what he already knew through half-a-dozen servants, that I had been up to the Generaless' room, and that she had been kind—"I'm glad ; at bottom she's the noblest of women"—whilst the dwarf too had been most amiable—"I have always said he is slandered."

Soon Julian began sometimes to avoid me, and my eyes. He was ashamed of something, I did not know what ; he did not know himself.

As Weronika among the women, Karol became my best common-sense friend among the men, and full of his new mistress over at G., told me their Unholy Hours.

Sebastyan haunted my room most. As we always talked English, he was able to improve himself in that language without forcing me to give him set lessons, a right which he graciously waived ; 'graciously' was his own word. I had a notion that his relations with Julian were becoming more strained—something to do with his vices, perhaps, or with

money—that he had outrageously outstayed his welcome, and that Julian was at last summoning his shy courage to tell him so. These were notions only ; for though we all discoursed together of all parts of the body and pinings of the soul, the politics of this world and the others, though we scoured the universe and peered at pinpoints together, yet of a good deal that was going on around me I was told nothing. Even Poles have reticences.

Grandmother was failing, though with inconsiderate sloth . “ Two months,” said the doctors now. Sebastyan wanted to bet on the actual day.

God told me I might do what I could to shape Julian as his mother desired . Whether or no a long hypnotic talk I had with him one midnight was the reason, the morrow was the first of a series of days filled with filial huggings and maternal happiness,—and as it happened the beginning of a more peaceful period all round, when they were all near as kind to each other as always they were to me. The grateful Generaless, in particular, praised me to the skies, and lost no opportunity of patting my unwilling back. So high in her favour stood I that I was afraid of Zwan’s jealousy. “ Fear not,” he reassured me, adding, like Czeltén : “ I never envy whom I like.”

Meanwhile, away from the chateau people, I had an odd adventure of my own.

Preferring to be prisoner, I hardly ever went outside the boundaries of the park. One sultry afternoon, however, I wanted to taste the plains. I walked out past the lodge, through the village of Praz, and along the great Warsaw road. After the village, I met no one.

I took to a new highway that led through open empty country. But for my feet the roads were silent.

I had a sheaf of history-notes in my hand and glanced at them from time to time, though chiefly observant of the country around me, which was changing. No longer the eternal flat wheatfields alternating with dark forests, but blue undulating downs, bare and well-nigh treeless. The white road mounted, only a few feet maybe, yet making the biggest hill I had seen in this country. On the crest ahead of me, against the sky-line, stood a sparse row of towering poplars ;

I watched them, stark against heaven ; stood still, looked round at the blue country, possessed it.

Distant footsteps ; and I turned sharply round. Three or four hundred yards behind me, two men were running. I distinguished buff uniforms, surmised soldiers. In the instant came the idea, came and conquered, that they were after me. I looked no longer at my trees ; and without any clear notion beyond idiot flight, walked quickly on. I gained the crest in a moment, and saw below me, a mile or two ahead, a large village. I turned round ; still they were running. Harmless Russian soldiers ; or rural police, or whatever they called them. Or Cossacks.

They had reached the foot of the rise, were running quicker, were gaining on me. I too mended my pace, making the pretence, as sop to my pride, that I was not running from the soldiers, oh dear no ! but was taking a bit of most necessary exercise : for verily I was cooped up too much at Praz, hardly ever going out of sight of the house ! To give colour to my sham, I sought to run, not as he that fleeth from his pursuers, but with a steady cross-country sort of trot, my arms up in professional runners' fashion ; aping the gesture with which, in contests at Oxford, I had more than once helped to lose points for my college in the half-mile and mile. The white imperial highway was asphalt track, Polish blue was Ifley green. They were faster now, and nearer. They would win : (1) Russia ; (2) Russia ; (3) Exeter—England—me. This game was pitiful, this dodge had failed. Besides, what moonshine : was I crazy ? Why forsooth should Russian soldiers be pursuing *me* ?

They were nearer : I had visualised Oxford track to sustain my pride, and had failed ; I would sing a song to sustain my courage, and would succeed. The tune I found myself humming, though at first jerky to run to, was The Campbells are Coming. Campbells soon changed—I know not why : ask Freud, ask dead Tsar Nicholas—to Cossacks. And courage found comfort none. The Cossacks are Coming, The Cossacks are Coming. Ceasing to hum aloud, I repeated unchangingly the four words, kept at bay reflection and his camp-follower fear. Now they were gaining on me hard. Fool, fool : I am an innocent British subject, fearful because

two wretched Rushyuns are running along a road ; no doubt to get back to their barracks in time, or (like me) for exercise, or courage. I am an Englishman—dear Devon smell !—and will show them an Englishman's phlegm.

I slowed down to a languid self-conscious stroll, obscene in God's countryside ; fetched out my eyeglass, screwed it into my eye. What a fine view it gave me of the village church tower, near ahead. Why it was Magdalen, and I was a Magdalen blood swaggering down the High.

The Petersburg proctors were upon me.

On my shoulders two pairs of paws, swift handcuffs on my wrists, two brutish faces jostling mine. For the first moments, as they hustled and gripped and bound me, I was incapable of thought. One word peopled my brain :

Siberia.

I did not think on the indignity, the dangers, the improbability of what was happening. There was only the word : and the map. The great cold map, white and pale green in Patmore mappery. The great cold sweep of that terrible land, swerving bleakly round the top o' the world from the Urals to Alaska. The little black names in the map were moving, they were gangs of wretches from the mines, sometimes five, sometimes eight or ten or twelve felons chained together ; they were moving, struggling in their chains, writhing in the frozen twilight ; they were still, they were dead.

Far away I apprehended that the soldiers were talking to me, questioning me in their language. One, the elder, was more villainous than the other : a boy, who, though thick-lipped and Asiatic, had friendlier eyes. The questions were in broken Polish ; between themselves they used a different speech.

" I don't understand," I said at last in Polish.

This they understood, and finding I knew something of a tongue of which they knew something, they shook me to say more.

" Praz," I said, " I am from Praz," and pointed vaguely back in the direction I supposed the chateau to lie, though I had utterly lost my bearings.

To this they agreed by headshakes. " Ha, we knew that,"

the older villain seemed to be saying. Then "*Paszport?*" he sneered, "*Paszport?*"

I could only point weakly in its supposed direction and repeat "Chateau of Praz."

They mumbled again in the other language. Then the old ruffian turned to me with a question I guessed to be, "What's your nationality?"

"Angielski" I replied, drawing myself up as proudly as manacles allowed.

This did not have quite the success I hoped. They did not swiftly, subserviently, unhand me. Sweet though 'I am a British subject' may sound in a Britisher's own ear, powerful Open Sesame though in many places and circumstances it may prove, to-day it did not seem to have its due effect: here in Tsardom. Forgetting my plight, my inexplicable inextricable plight, I let myself be carried away by a gust of patriotic rage, mere vulgar patriotic rage, like any Pole or German. The impudence of it. Mucky foreigners!

"I am a British subject," I shouted in Polish warningly. My gaolers grimaced, held fast, peered, breathed foully in my face, giggled and gabbled together.

Even so are there many Englishmen and Englishwomen who, when summoned before the Throne of God the Father, and when to the Almighty's question with unwavering confidence they reply 'I am English,' or 'I am a member of the Church of England,' will find the effect but small, will see the encircling angels shrug their wings, twitter, quirk even.

The two soldiers were quirking.

"Take me back" I pleaded, realising that I had at last said something practical, had said the only practical thing that, with arms pinioned and tongue well-nigh pinioned too, there was to say.

It did in fact decide them, but in the opposite sense, and direction, to my hopes. They set off suddenly down the hill, haling me, a shameful prisoner—manacled, monocled—to the village near ahead. As we gained this place and passed the cottages, peasants stared; open-mouthed, silent; with curiosity chiefly, though also, I fondly thought, with sympathy. Soon a crowd was following.

For a moment I was able to think clearly, and fear was greater than humiliation. Whether phantom or real, these soldiers were devils' emissaries. It was my own fault, utterly. Are you awake, Emmanuel? Are you alive? Unlike many of earth's children I had had full warning of my fate. Why had I not heeded Mr. Quince and Nellie? Why had I not taken my chances of escape: at Oxford, at Paris, at Kalisz—the lost passport had been a providence, criminally spurned—at Breslau even? But had I been free to do so? Had not my eternity been diced for long ago?

I fell to wondering where they were taking me. To some pestilent first gaol, the first of a long series linked across the frozen wolved steppes of Russia? No, it was the village inn. They dragged me into the smoke-begrimed bar. The two or three drinkers stared. The soldiers bade me be seated on a chair in a dark corner. They ordered drinks; the taverner asked questions about me; they leered and pointed. For hours they took liquor, lushing and bibbing, swilling and boozing, as good Russians can—and do. They forgot me.

I must find some plan, some policy. But in the instant I began to search, Siberia came back, frozen, exilian; filled the whole picture of my mind, pushed all other visions to the dim borderland of consciousness beyond the map, drove them southward beyond the inward parts of Asia, eastward beyond Alaska, Yukon way . . . I strove to beat the obsession off, to sweep my brain clear for cogitation on some scheme; strove desperately, but could not. Then it occurred to me, subliminally, that though with one single brain-gesture I might not be able to dispel Siberia to make place for the clear thinking my case cried for, I could gradually substitute for it other pictures, gradually dissimilar only, and hardly less irrelevant to my need, replacing them in turn, by sly gradations, by the thoughts I needed. First I sought to conjure up the shape of England. What was England? I could still see only the same frozen-green map, stretching from Urals to Behring. Then (unconsciously I was choosing easy shapes and that through the inward parts of Asia tailed southward, Siberia-flying): India; South America; Italy. I heard myself muttering the words; the picture in my brain stayed always the same.

Wearied, I ceased to try. A half-instant later Siberia had vanished, and my mind was clear. Practical notions began to take form. Escape.

There was a low varnished door near me, at the back of the room, opposite the entrance. Whither might it lead, not lead? Several peasants near me, or so I imagined, gave encouraging smiles. They were friends. Grandmother was right: Down with Russia! Vive la Pologne! There was such a noise now, the bar being full, that if I made a dash for it the clanking of my handcuffs might not perhaps be heard. There were folk between me and my bibbing gaolers, who for a long time now had not looked round to assure themselves of my presence.

The little dream-door opened, a woman's face peered into the room, seemed to beckon me. Hallucination? No matter: so was the world.

"Follow her, Emmanuel," said my mother.

I obeyed. In a flash I was through the door, through an outhouse into the open air (and rain), following after the woman, who, running, turned from time to time to see that I was there; along by a brook, across a rickety wooden bridge, through a kind of farmyard, in to a cottage. She closed the door behind us, but I had no fear of danger. Mother had bid me follow.

The cottage consisted of one large room curtained off at each end. The floor was of earth, the furniture primitive; one long table, a bench on either side of it. There was no chimney; the walls were blackened with smoke. Huddled in a corner was a peasant Ostowska, an ageless crone. She stared at me and nodded. Evidently she was hard of hearing, as the younger woman bent down and shouted in her ear: explanations of me no doubt. Their speech I could not follow. By signs my saviour made me understand that I was to clamber into the roof for safety; this, with much difficulty, for I was still manacled, and by her help, I managed to do. In the rafters it was moist and comfortless; but safe. And craning my neck I could see part of the room below. A hunk of bread and a cup of hot brew were passed up to me. My friend shouted many questions, which I could not properly

understand. Nor with my sevenscore words of Polish, eatables mainly, could I embark on the story of my arrest.

"Lelewel," I pronounced, "I—friend—Prince Julian Lelewel—Praz." Surely a sensible speech, more to the point than many I have made.

She seemed to understand.

"Russian?" she asked.

"No."

"German?"

"No: *Angielski*."

Presently she went out of the cottage—I heard only the old one breathing—returned after a few minutes.

A moment later heavy footsteps, double footsteps, approached the cottage. My heart beat fast.

"Friends," called up the good woman, and from my coign of moist vantage I saw come in an oldish peasant woman and a young man. The latter wore a black western suit, and looked more townsman than villager.

"Good day Sir." Oh welcomest twang. "Come down. There's no danger now. The two soldiers have left our village, thinking you made off across the fields. I guess they'll have to search all night."

They helped me down and gave me eager place on one of the benches. The other newcomer, a bitter-looking woman, was apparently the mother of the young man. The latter filed off my handcuffs and hid them in his hip-pocket.

"You are English, Kasia says," he began. "I have been in America five years, at the Bethlehem Steel Works, you have heard of them? Kasia here and her old aunt are kinsfolk of my mother's. Who are you, sir? How can we help you?"

Never a word or glance of suspicion that I might be a malefactor: arrest by the Imperial authorities was perhaps sufficient proof that I was not. Never a word of anything but kindness, with nothing to gain or gather, and risk for only profit.

"As I tried to explain to my saviour, I am over from England, staying at his house at Praz with my friend Prince Julian Lelewel." The name made its impression: snob they, snob you. "I was taking a walk along the roads when

suddenly these two soldiers seized me. I have no notion why. I have committed no crime."

"Sure. All we know is that the Russians are after you. That is enough for us, sir : we help you. Say, listen : stay here till after dark ; then I will take you over to Praz. There is a nearer way across the fields, that'll take not more than an hour or two. Besides, hear the storm : and you would have to wait in any case till the soldiers are well clear. Why they mishandled you I can't guess, sir. They are always so careful to treat foreigners well, especially foreigners from a great and happy country like England, just as careful as they are to treat us ill. Kasia here and Marya, her old auntie, have suffered more at their hands than mother and I, for things now are better than they were ; indeed, old Marya has gone through more than anyone in these parts. She came from Podolia—down east, you know—and saw the forced baptisms of forty years ago. Maybe Kasia will tell you about them ; I'd wish her to, though it's painful for her ; old Marya herself is deaf, and won't understand. Then when you're through this trouble and get back to England one day, you'll tell the folks in your country what folks have been through here, as I used to tell them in the States."

"I will," I promised. And now, ten years gone by, shall keep that promise here.

Kasia had been preparing supper : soup and a dish of cabbage and herbs. When we had finished eating, she began.

She spoke in a low colourless voice, pausing every few minutes, as in some of our Geneva conferences, for the young man to interpret. His mother smiled bitterly. The aged one, on a stool apart, stared as they told her unheard litany.

"I don't want to tell our story," said Kasia, "it will only make me miserable. The old mother would go wild if she understood. But Michal says it helps, to talk to a foreign gentleman of these things. It is near forty years ago, when I was a child of seven, in the days of the forced baptisms. The Muscovite Tsar ordered that we must all worship his God, and bring our children for christening to the Muscovite priests. I was living with Uncle and Aunt ; my Aunt's son was a baby in the cradle. I was young, but understood what I saw.

When the soldiers and the Greek priests came, our village stood out. We believed in God and the Virgin. None would sign for the new faith, and none would have their children baptised by the popes. The Tsar sent more soldiers. I remember the tears. It was one winter's morning before dawn. Mother—I always called her Mother, for my own was dead—said to me, '*Kasia, the Cossacks are coming.* We must fly.' 'Where, Mother?' 'Out to the fields.' 'But they are covered with snow.' At dawn they entered the village, emptied the houses, and drove us out into the open country. We were there until nightfall, and through the night, and the next day, shivering, starving, clearing away the snow with our hands in the cruel cold. Some of us lost arms and legs, but none denied his faith. Then they tried something else. They forbade us to feed our horses and cattle, and for a week you heard nothing in the village, day and night, but the cries of the poor beasts. We were forbidden to give them a single pail of water, a single handful of straw; or it was the knout. The men were wild with grief. They threw themselves on the ground at the soldiers' feet, and asked mercy for our animals. The poor beasts, mad with hunger, gnawed their racks, dashed themselves against the walls and perished. Father stole round to our shed one night to take some food to his cattle. They caught him, and he was hacked to death. . . . Mother cried for three days, but she still had me and Baby Jan. 'Sign!' said the soldiers. But they could not defeat us. 'Mercy!' we cried. 'Sign!' they answered. But sign the people did not, for salvation was at stake, and Heaven. I know now that they were right, but then I did not understand, for I was hungry. We children pleaded with our fathers and mothers: 'Sign!' we said, like the soldiers. But nobody signed, not one. . . .

"Then there came a new order from the Tsar, and the soldiers went away. It was a starving winter, with no cattle and little food; but there was peace for a while. The summer came, and though there was little to eat, things were better. But we knew the danger was not at an end. Tales reached us from other parts. We heard of old men hacked to pieces, and of women dying after a hundred blows with the knout, and of children lying on the roadside, their heads eaten by flies:

and of little girls raped by the soldiers—we children knew what it meant—and of the Russian General who was sent down to quell us nourishing his deer with the Polish mothers' milk, while the babies died for want of it. We knew that the soldiers and Greek priests were only waiting a moment to attack us anew. A strict watch was kept. Mother and the other women held themselves ready to flee. But in spite of the watch, one stormy night—like to-night—they surrounded Mother's house. She fled to the roof, and tearing off the thatch thrust her head through the hole, and called for help: 'The Cossacks! The Cossacks!' They smashed in the door; they were soon inside. They kicked me away; Mother was dragged down, trodden under foot as if she were a wisp of straw, and though she fought like a she-wolf they tore little Jan from her, and carried him away to the Greek priests. Mother rushed screaming after them, and we all ran after. She crawled on her knees before them, she kissed their boots and leggings. They turned on her, trampled on her. Then they locked and barred the church door, carrying the baby in with them to the popes. Mother and Uncle and all the others tried to force the doors and the windows, but in vain, and then she turned to the crowd, and cried: 'Save him, people, save him! He is called Jan. I nearly died when he was born. He was baptized at once—it is in the register, the godfathers are still alive—everybody knows about it. Don't let him be lost! He is three years old, and he already knows his prayers, our Polish prayers, our Catholic prayers. My man was beaten to death; I haven't a single piece of bread in the house, I've only got him, and now they are taking him away from me. Is this the end of the world? Is there no longer any God, nor justice, nor Virgin? Kill me like a dog, but save him!' She fainted away, and we carried her home.

"All night she was raving, crying 'Save him, save him!' as I watched over her. At dawn she came to herself, and without a word or tear or sigh, knelt down and prayed. Then she got up, and kissed me, and roared with laughter. She was mad. Later in the morning we heard the cry of a child, and someone knocked at the door, ordering us to open, and saying that the child was there. But she would not open, and held me back. 'I have no longer a child' she said. The men

left the child against the wall, and fled. It was cold and raining, and I heard the child crying, but Mother would not let me fetch him in. A neighbour called out at the door. 'Hush!' said Mother, 'My child has gone to sleep,' and she sat down by the empty cradle, and started rocking it. News went round the village that Mother had gone mad, and a neighbour took charge of little Jan, who died a few days later. 'Jan is dead,' they said to Mother. She smiled, and showed them a doll in the cradle. 'Dead?' she laughed, 'No, he is here. I didn't give him up to them after all. I saved him, I saved his soul.' And she rocked the doll in the cradle, and sang to it——"

In her corner the old witch's eyes had been getting brighter and brighter. She staggered to her feet, took up a wretched straw pillow, held it in her arms, kissed it, opened her bosom; then, still hugging the pillow, and moaning, and laughing, sank down again on her stool, and sang a lullaby, and crooned herself to sleep.

With wet eyes I stared.

"She's asleep now," said Kasia. "She hasn't been taken like that for years. That's about all the story. Soon afterwards we wandered over the country until we came here, nearly forty years ago. Ah, it was all cruelty then. Things are not so bad now, though life is still hard; poverty and often hunger, and slaving in the fields."

"Yes, poverty and slaving" broke in savagely the other woman, the mother of my American, "poverty and slaving, that's all it is. We are serfs still. What Kasia tells is true of the Russians, but are our own lords and masters much better? A lot they care for us, living in the foreign cities, revelling in their chateaus, spending more money on one feast than we on all our bread for a year."

"And they talk of Poland, our dear country," cried the young man, "when it is they, too, as much as any Russians, who are the enemies of our country. If Poland ever lives again, it will be a Poland of *ours*, not of our lords and masters."

"Some are good," said Kasia, "The Lelewels have borne their own share in the Russian cruelties. They have given us more, and taken less from us, than the others. The old

Ostowska—your prince's grandmother, sir—nearly gave her life for our country many times, back in the old rebellions : perhaps you didn't know ?"—and perhaps I did : Damn ! Bloody !—" And gives half her money away to the peasants now."

" There aren't many like her, I guess," said Michal.

" Few enough," said his mother. " They're all our enemies. I don't hate Russians and Russian soldiers more than I hate Polish nobles and Polish Jews. It is we who make the bread for them, and eat only slavery and hunger in return." . . .

" Let us set out," said Michal. I kissed the women Good-night, and set out across the sodden fields with my guide. As we neared Praz, a new storm came on, but I cared nothing, as through the rain I could see the village ahead. At the lodge the dogs bayed ; the old lodge-keeper opened the gate, and I was home.

Some children ran before us to the chateau with the news of my return. Julian and the others came out to meet me. They wore raincoats and were soaked through. Julian was very pale.

" We have been searching for you for long hours. Thank God you're back. Where have you been ? Tell me quickly, as I too have a story to tell. Alas, what trouble to-day ! First you, then something else."

We went into the house. " This is Michal who brought me back " I explained, and said Goodbye to him, Julian telling the butler to give him a meal and dry clothes. I told my story. " What does it mean ? " I concluded.

" You've done nothing wrong, have you ? " asked Julian quickly, " I don't mean anything criminal—but you've never in England written articles against Russia, for instance, or anything political ? "

" Never ; though I shall when I get back ! "

" It's beyond me, and I'm as furious as I'm puzzled. Though they know my ideas, I have always been on good terms enough with the authorities. Besides——. To-morrow we will drive over to L., the head town of the government, to see what we can find out. You have a clear conscience, and you're an Englishman, so there can be no danger, or—

Take your passport, and any other papers you have. Thank Heaven you are found, that's the main thing. But if that's one trouble done with——"

I will leave Julian's story for a moment, as I had best recount here the not very remarkable end and explanation of my own mysterious adventure. Mystery it was, though not the Devil's, being due—bathos, sweet Whitehall bathos!—solely to a 'clerical error.'

This is what we discovered when we drove over to L. next day.

In the governor's office at the capital town was kept an official register of all foreigners staying in the 'government.' Against my name there had been entered in the column Nationality the word German. "Doubtless milord, because"—this was the wretched under-clerk's explanation when I produced my triumphant passport—because the latter was not of the usual format issued by the Foreign Office in London, but of a special kind, most rare and unusual—he himself in thirty-one years of service had never before seen one—as issued by the British Embassy at Berlin.

There was more, and worse, we gathered, reading between the lines of the head-clerk's not less milordly speech. This was a period of great activity, or supposed activity, on the part of German spies in all western Russia, in view of the war between Germany and Russia that was brewing, as gentlemen in the very highest positions in St. Petersburg said. In any case, it was a time of great activity in spy-hunting on the part of the Russian authorities, and Germans especially were being watched. When therefore it was learned that a German, holder of a German passport and entered as such in the holy government register, was staying at the house of a notorious Polish patriot and giving himself out to be an Englishman, the local authorities became interested, felt important, got busy. They peered at their records again, and confirmed that I was German; through police-agents and the gossip of neighbouring houses, they confirmed that I was to all appearances English, most cunningly disguised as such.

"How do you mean: 'cunningly disguised'?" I asked, Julian interpreting.

“Milord’s trousers, milord’s elegant jacket——” Ready-made both. Unsolicited testimonial for that tailor in the Corn.

The Governor, thus misled, had deigned to see fit to order that I should be watched, and finally that, at a suitable moment, I should be arrested.

They could, of course, have come to the chateau and arrested me there, but had apparently preferred to watch my game, and to catch me if they could red-handed, spying for the German Kaiser. Still, if seen alone at any distance from the chateau, I was to be taken at once. “That was the order, milord.” Several men had been detached for the job.

Now they were all apologies, apologies to me, apologies to Julian. They bobbed low and often; but the head-clerk bobbed oftener and lower than the under-clerk.

“His Excellency the Governor is away,” lied the former, “but he himself will regret it when he learns of it,” and there followed a shameful rating of the latter, and a few cuffs and kicks, perhaps unmerited, but not unpleasant to witness, on the head-parts and hind-parts of my two soldier friends, who, brought into our presence, outbobbed their civilian chiefs, bowing ceaselessly to the under-clerk, the head clerk, to Julian and to me.

Happy ending. After all, though Julian was a Pole, and a patriot Pole, what was more important he was a rich Pole, and though I was neither rich nor anything else in particular, I was a subject of His Britannic Majesty, blood cousin and Dear Brother of the Petersburg Tsar, whom now they have hacked to pieces, as his fathers and forefathers hacked.

CHAPTER XIII : ZWAN SONG

I will go back now to the moment of my midnight return.

"Run upstairs" said Julian, "and put on some dry clothes. There will be food ready for you in the dining-room." We'll all eat something. Jan ! Félo !! " He gave orders. "We have been out for hours in the worst of the storm searching for you ; Sebastyan and I and half-a-dozen men in one party, Karol and Weronika with half-a-dozen others in another. I'm famished."

When we were seated round the table in the great dimly-lit dining-room Julian began ; with Karol and Seb for listeners besides myself. Weronika had bidden us Good night ; the Generaless trio was not on show, had presumably retired.

The two men already knew what he had to tell ; I was pleased that I was important enough, and friends enough, for him to be so anxious that I should hear it. Chiefly I was agog to know what it might be. What sharper mystery ? He was white with the rage of a placid man, ill to see.

"I am wild," he said. "You don't know me yet, *mon ami*."

Mon ami set me trembling ; the words were ambidextrous. Was I somehow the cause, and should I be the victim of his anger ?

But no—"I am tolerant, as you know, to the point of weakness, except of one thing : intolerance. I interfere with nothing and nobody, except when I see intolerable interference in others' affairs or in mine. Emile is the cause of the trouble. He has rather effaced himself since we've been at Praz, living in one of my cottages near the lodge in peace and comfort ; as you know, he has had practically no driving to do. In need of occupation, he has been enjoying himself with one of my peasant girls, as Frenchmen, and even others perhaps, sometimes do. He's done her no harm, there's no suggestion that a baby's expected, or anything serious, and they were both

perfectly happy. Monsieur Zwan, however, has been on the watch ; even crawling along by the hedge where they were making each other glad ; and to-day, having at last succeeded in surprising them in flagrante delicto, he rushed in, glistening with his discovery, cried, ' Vice ! Infamy ! The worst and last of the sins ! ', poured his story into Mother's ears and made her join him in the preposterous demand that Emile should be packed off : sent back now, to-day, immediately, to France ! All through dinner, he and Mother and Klementyna have been nagging and screeching, Mother upbraiding me in the cruellest terms, Zwan shouting ' Infamy, infamy ! This house is unclean ! ' ; Weronika, who is innocence itself, asking every minute what it was all about, and all of us worried enough already by your disappearance. After dinner I went to get ready for the search, but Mother followed me to my room, weeping : ' It is a test,' she said, ' a test between saintliness and sin. A test—and an ultimatum : Sergius says that he will for ever leave this house unless within forty eight hours Emile has left it. You won't let him, dear son ? Say quickly you won't. I bare you. I gave you your life and your soul. Without Sergius I should lose my life and my soul. Send the Frenchman away, and save your mother ! ' Zwan followed her into my room. ' Get along out ! ' I cried, for all Mother's pleas. He moved to the door, but not before he had time to taunt : ' Beware ! Where is the young Englishman you're setting out to search for ? Why has he disappeared ? Who knows ? None may stand in God's way. Suppose I will that he never comes back ? What happens then ? The Government of England is powerful at St. Petersburg. You would have plentiful trouble with the authorities, and I know many things you have said, many things——.' I made for him to get him, but he ran. I told Mother that that was the end, and issued *my* ultimatum. I said that if within twenty-four hours the bug had not come to me for pardon, crawling on all fours, I would have him thrashed, then taken by the scruff of the neck and bundled out of my house for ever. Mother wept and pleaded and abused. ' Block ! Stone ! ' she called me, but I turned her out too : ' Son who came out of my womb ! Son who came out of my womb ! ' she was shouting. ' They are all of them upstairs now, concocting some evil against me.

Peace, I wish nothing but peace to others ; why do I get none myself ? Find me the reason, Emmanuel Lee, the reason, the reason. . . . You see this cudgel——. Let them do what they will, I am my own master, I am not afraid."

He was afraid. For as a clattering, well-known clattering, could be heard at the top of the stairs outside, he turned paler, twiddled his fingers.

In silence we waited, as step by step they came nearer, as they crossed the hall, as they came through the curtains, that ghastly farcical trio, processioning, shuffling towards us.

"Good evening," said each of them to me, "I'm glad you're safe back," with a politeness genuine enough, but exploited for joy of contrast.

Halt ! The three stood still before us. I could stare at Zwan only, at the white fanatic lips, which kept whispering some phrase—"Filth and debauchery," I thought.

"Filth and debauchery," echoed the Generaless.

"Filth and debauchery," echoed the Canoness.

Only echoes.

Julian grew whiter. "I have said 'for the last time,' like a weak man, many times. This is *the* last time. Down on your knees, dog ! Apologise ; grovel !"

Zwan, his pale face suffused as though with hope, came forward from the women, stood alone.

"Prince," he intoned, drawing himself up proudly to his full four-foot-four, "in the eyes of this world I am merely the humblest guest beneath your roof, a despised and rejected ; while you are a lord of the earth. But in the eyes of God, you are the abased and I the mighty. I am nearer to Him than you all, and He hath commanded me to speak. His laws have been broken, and one of His angels hath spoken to me, saying, 'Sergius, avenge My law.' It is a battle not between Sergius Zwan, bastard, orphan, poor clerk, and Julian Lelewel, great prince ; but between spirit and flesh, good and evil, God and His Enemy. The girl was pure and walked in the sight of God. By lies and false promises the filthy atheist man has corrupted her body and imperilled her lovely soul. The angel said, 'Sergius, speak !' Hearken then, Prince ; it is the salvation of your soul too that is at stake. The debauched criminal must go. *Must*. It is an order !"

Ready to kill, Julian sprang up from the table, holding the cudgel he had brought in from the hall ; raised it.

At the approach of physical danger, at the sight of coming hurt and humiliation, Zwan grew more eager, more radiant.

" Bow down ! Bow down ! He that findeth his life shall lose it : and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. Bow down ! Bow down ! For soon, in a little moment now, I shall be a Saint ! "

His eyes were luminous and wild, his face transfigured : " Son of Mary, now I shall receive the stigmata. Strike here, and here, and here ! " he cried, in a wild voice from heaven, as he held out first one hand and then the other, and then, with awful triumphant contortions as the blows rained, one foot and then the other, and last, drawing himself up before mad Julian, offered his breast.

Five blows.

The last one felled him ; his tiny body curled up on the floor.

Then it picked itself up and scuttled towards the hall, Julian rushing after, who would have beaten the saintly dwarf, the dwarfly saint, almost unto death had not the Generaless, with catlike speed, snatched the cudgel away.

We rose and followed. Stolid Karol was trembling. Seb was flapping his hands from side to side, giggling nervously, boasting for no one to heed, " I alone am sane." I looked on with what mixed feelings of pity and worship and loathing I do not know. The Canoness, hysterical, elbowed her way back through us into the room screaming " Malaga ! Brandy ! " seeking alcoholic succour for her saint.

Zwan crossed the hall (we following hard), and evading the distraught Generaless who sought to plant kisses on his ankles, his wrists, his neck, crawled on his knees up the great staircase. At the bend of the stairway, ten steps—a Calvary—above us, he turned round, drew himself erect, faced us Redeemer-eyed, thrust out his skinny arms to right and left against the wall, stood on tiptoe, and crossed his wounded feet ; in the ghostly light looking, as he knew he looked, a diminutive Christ upon the Cross.

Without, the storm was raging, the earth quaked, the house trembled.

" Now and for ever," he cried, " I am a Saint ! "

CHAPTER XIV : STIGMATA

From that night we saw him no more, either at table or elsewhere. Nor did Generaless or Canoness appear at meals, though I met the former sometimes in the park, when she bowed amicably. I resisted frequent temptation to visit the enemy party ; loyalty to Julian, whose friend and guest (and dependant) I was, aided and abetted by sheer funk, funk of Julian, funk of Weronika, gaining the day.

At table we were a more peaceful, but not more cheerful party. Already, Karol told me, there was murmuring in the villages ; the peasants said that Zwan was a holy man, and that Julian, kind prince and master as he was, must have gone sheer mad to flog him so. Though Julian affected to say ‘ good riddance ’ and repeated hourly “ Now I have peace,” in reality he had no peace at all, himself more than half believing that the peasants were right, and sick, for reasons ranging from purest love to mere care for her money-bags, to see that the Grandmother was against him and dribbled indistinct adoration for Zwan at every meal.

Karol went away to spend a week at his home in Lithuania ; Weronika was seedy and confined to her room for a day or two ; I glued myself to my books, took advantage of a quarrel Seb picked with me to shut my door in his face, and hardly saw anyone except at meals.

Julian was solitary, alone with his nerves—and Sebastyan.

“ Let us get out of this ! ” he cried at dinner one day, “ I’ll take you to see Warsaw.”

Quince and the goblins danced for an instant behind his chair.

“ It would be splendid,” I said faintly.

“ I’m sure you’d like it. I’m not giving you much of a time here, and Warsaw is worth seeing ; we’d go in the car, and afterwards could make a short tour in the more interesting country beyond, in the south-west of the Kingdom——”

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ” cackled Seb.

Julian, who had been half-away, sat up, came to himself, apprehended Seb's sneer, and turned upon him. "Why 'Ha, ha, ha!'?"

Sebastyan did not wince, but insolently answered: "Ha because I'm coming to Warsaw with you, ha because when Lee has seen Warsaw you will bring him straight back here, ha because three ha's are funnier than two. Ha, ha, ha!"

It was preposterous, and yet what I expected: Julian pocketed this insolence.

He at first refused, however, to agree that Seb should accompany us. The latter, in gabbled Polish (to prevent my following) appeared to bully anew; which tactics failing, he cringed and whined, shed tears, enormous tears, recalled old childhood days together, enquired if it was not tragic that a Polish noble should be too poor to spend a day or two in Warsaw and be without friend or kinsman to invite him.

In the end, of course, Julian gave in, paying, as I afterwards discovered, not only Seb's fare and hotel bill but also his pocket money for the outing.

We decided to set out on the morrow. The rain, however, was so torrential that we had to abandon the idea of going by car. Leaving Emile to his amours, we took the train from G——. Seb proved to be the most beastly selfish company I ever knew even a railway journey afford, grabbing the best corner, for all the drenching rain opening both windows wide: "Continuous fresh air is necessary for my complexion"—producing and devouring alone sandwiches which he had had prepared at the house, Julian's house, made with Julian's ham and Julian's bread, setting to with never so much as that swift perfunctory acceptance-dreading gesture of sharing which brazenest guzzlers affect, 'ha-ha-ha'-ing beneath his breath to annoy Julian, caricaturing my French to annoy me: in a word, behaving like the First Gentleman in Poland.

Julian, who had only a tiny bachelor's flat in the capital, put Seb and myself up at the Hotel Polonia, brand-new and as hateful as I have since found luxury-caravanserais everywhere to be. The weather was so bad that despite my tourist zeal I could hardly go out of doors. Julian had business to do, and said that we might stay on a day or two and give the rain time to cease.

One morning, when the skies were at last beginning to clear, the three of us were seated in the American bar of the Hotel Bristol, esconced on high stools, drinking pre-prandial vodka and eating pre-prandial caviare, telling good tales and laughing sanely together, when Emile, wild and breathless, who had tracked his master here, burst in like a ghost on our merriment.

Madame the Countess Ostowska had had a stroke, was dying, might live a few hours only.

Zwan had installed himself, almost naked, on a mat in her room, was 'fasting' there, had groaned and prayed through the whole night, stealing the old woman's sleep.

"The mad brute is killing her, Monsieur le Prince!" cried Emile, "and the fools of peasants are crowding into the house and room to pay their last respects to her and to worship him."

Emile had come in the car that Julian might have the news and get home the sooner. We had a hurried and gloomy luncheon, went round to our respective quarters to pack, and within the hour were ready for the two hundred verst ride to Praz.

"Sit with me in the back of the car" Julian had whispered at luncheon in a moment when Seb appeared deep in his *Kurjer Warszawski*, "To-day I can't bear to have him with me.

Sebastyan heard; pretended not to.

As the car, with Julian seated as always in the right-hand back seat, drove up to the front of the Polonia, where Seb and I were awaiting it, our dear friend rushed forward and plumped himself gleefully down in the left-hand back seat.

"Say you want to sit with me" signalled Julian fearfully, throwing the nasty job to me.

"I'm to sit there, Sebastyan" I said mock-masterful, "Julian said so," throwing the onus back.

Emile made a face. ("I don't want *that* next me.")

"Well, turn me out; try!" sneered Seb.

Julian shrugged his shoulders; so did Emile; so did I. "You may be sorry" I blustered feebly, as I got in beside Emile; Heaven backing my bluster, as you will see.

We scorched through the long suburbs, seared the glum countryside. Julian's sore need to see his grandmother alive was some excuse; while the straight open highways there make

motorists' egotism less vile, less Revolution-kindling, than on the hedged and tortuous roads of our own island.

Cruel speed, criminal speed. Yet we reached almost the journey's end without mishap. Emile, emboldened, bragged that he would do the few remaining versts in record time.

"Don't go *too* fast" I pleaded.

"It's a race with death, Monsieur."

And so, in yet another way than Emile had meant, it swiftly proved to be.

I sighted a long train of carts coming towards us. The driver of the first of these, a smocked Jew, seemed to be asleep, had not even, I think—though we were upon him so fast that I could swear to nothing—his hand upon the reins. As we flashed by, I had an instant's vision of the horse rearing in fright, and a vague notion of impact and of a clattering behind us. I turned round and saw, and "Stop" I cried to Emile.

What had befallen was this. The horse had plunged, and before the sleeping driver could control his vehicle, which was of the single-shaft pattern commonest in those parts, the shaft had struck the back of the car.

And struck Sebastyan.

It had peeled clean off a slice of overcoat, coat and shirt alike, revealing a white corner of flesh, bruised but not bleeding. It had missed his head, and he death, or at least horrible disfigurement, by half an inch. He was green, and fell back fainting against Julian, who, sheet-white, teeth chattering, had been badly shaken, but not it seemed struck.

Emile and I, the two unscathed ones, jumped out. The back of the car was damaged, and the road for twenty yards behind littered with tools and splinters. Sebastyan came round, but neither he nor Julian could do anything but sit shuddering in their places, the while Emile and I somehow corded up the back of the car.

Meanwhile a score of Jews had clambered down from the other carts, had surrounded us, and were gabbling and gesticulating and threatening. The horse was lying in the road, wounded. Though it was a lonely part of the country, peasants had gathered from nowhere, from everywhere, from all the sunset fields that stretched in every direction further than the eye could see. The scene is engraved, in crimson,

on my memory : the old Jew railing at Emile for his speed, at us for our cruelty, the cruelty of the rich, pointing at the wretched horse, blubbering ; Emile, coarse-mouthed and handsome, cursing brutally back in Polish bad enough for me to understand : ' Asleep on the high road, dirty sheeny ! Wish I'd knocked you as well as your filthy nag ' ; the Jew cursing back, brave, as numbers were with him. Emile struck him in the face. Things looked ugly. Julian and Seb might as well have been dead men for all the help they could give ; soon would be dead, perhaps. A savage young Frenchman ; a menacing mob of Jews and peasants, armed with pitchforks and sticks ; two ill men ; a lonely roadside, the red sun, and me.

" Jump in ! " I ordered Emile, Julian nodding approval, " Drive through them ! " Both he and I were struck on the head with sticks, but the loud engine swept our way clear.

Safe from our pursuers, we slowed down again because of the invalids behind. Seb was whining and groaning ; like all ultra-selfish ones getting scant sympathy. " Baby-girl," sniggered Emile to me, " I hope Milady is really hurt. Damned nuisance about the car, though."

" All due to bad driving," moaned the wretch behind—Emile's French in my ear became lewder—" and due to my unselfishness in giving up the seat I really wanted." Ah no ! Under cover even of pain that lie was too brazen. Well, I hoped he was badly hurt. Not *too* badly, I added in an aside to Conscience, deciding that I would not formulate my hopes clearly till a doctor had spoken. For if he was really dangerously wounded, in that case I hoped he wasn't ; if he wasn't, however, I hoped he was. (Ha, ha, ha !)

We soon reached G., the little town nearest Praz. We fetched out the country doctor, who examined Seb, pronounced " Not serious," gave first aid—and a dose to Julian also—and accompanied us on to the chateau. It was dark when we arrived.

At the park gates we learned that Grandmother had rallied ; was for the moment out of danger. " Thank God ! " cried Julian, and afterwards heeded Sebastyan not at all.

The latter was borne moaning to his apartments. We got him into bed, where the doctor examined him more carefully ;

tended his arm, put it in a sling. He had had a bad shock, and though he had escaped death by a shave was not seriously hurt. A small bone was dislocated ; a simple matter.

" I must be taken to Warsaw," shouted the patient rudely, " and be examined by a serious surgeon, not an ignorant village leech ! "

I had supper alone with Karol, who had that day returned from Lithuania. No one else was to be seen ; Karol said they were all with the Grandmother. I was tired and went to bed.

The main drama of the house was unfolding itself in the dying Grandmother's bedroom, an apartment I had not yet seen, but whither next day, at the old lady's request, Karol conducted me to pay my respects. She had had a good night and was reported to be much better.

The moment of crossing the threshold of that room is as present as the half-dozen strangest of my life. Though it was broad daylight without, all the curtains were drawn ; the lighting was ghostly and dim, sacramental candles here and guttering rushlights there competing garishly with the grey lustre of an oil-lamp suspended from the ceiling. On the right stood a huge Arabian bedstead, lugubrious, more catafalque than bed, wherein—tiny, shrunken—propped up with pillows lay the ancient dame. Grandmother Wolf ! with your gleaming eyes, huge snout, foul skin. And I, with the basket of flowers I have brought as my offering, am Little Red-Riding-Hood. You lurch forward, grin ; ah, false one, would you leap from the bed and devour me ? No, folk are around you, encircling you, holding you back, saving me from you : Weronika and the priest and a nun on one side, and Julian, who is holding your paw, and the Sabbatyn on the other.

In the fleetingest second wherein these notions scurried through me, the fact that made them, and that they were, scurried also again through reality ; for at that pinpoint of time, as long as Eternity and as short, Grandmother *was* a wolf.

My eyes took my mind across the enormous room—as large as the Generaless', ground-floor replica of which it was—leftward to a straw mat, kneeling whereon almost naked, clad in a loincloth only, and chained by a long rope round one of his

wrists to a corner-post of wolf-bedstead, writhed Zwan. On stools, worshipping, sat Generaless and Canoness hard by.

Barefooted servants were scurrying in and out. The Generaless' dogs sprawled everywhere. There was a madness and a murmuring, and a smell.

Julian beckoned me. I bent over the bed, hardly at all reluctant—for that wolf-life was long ago—and kissed the primeval hand.

"*Sank you*" she mumbled, lupine. She laughed. She knew. Was near enough another life to remember others.

"Come over here, Monsieur Emmanuel," called Generaless from rival camp, "take this chair. Now you and Morawski are here and all the older servants, all of us here together" (she forgot Seb) "for the first time since God crowned his life, dear Sergius Zwan will give us his message from heaven to us all. Silence!"

He was on his knees, waving ever and anon his fleshless arms.

Still on his knees he began, speaking in French. Russian, the speech he liked best for godly converse, not all of us would have understood, and few of them would have abided. Polish would have been lost on me, whom, for a reason known to his heart and mine, he regarded as an important listener. French was acceptable to both pro- and anti-Russians, understood of us all, grateful even to God.

"Now we are all assembled, those who have mocked and those who have sought to understand, I am bidden to tell you the story of the Lord's goodness to me."

"I wish we could have quiet," murmured Julian feebly, "Grandmother must sleep."

"No" cried the old one, her speech thicker and more indistinct than I had known it, "It's a sign of God's favour to this house. Let him proceed!"

Zwan proceeded.

"My father was a Polish noble, who never knew that I was born. My mother was a Russian peasant woman. She died at my birth, hating me. The mark of bastardy was on me from the day I came into this world. My soul, as my body, was stunted from its first day. For a dwarf-child sees no love in other children's eyes, but indifference often, hate oftener,

mockery oftenest, and always fear. The mark of poverty too : away there in the south-east, in Podolia, the cruel shrew who fostered me had little enough to eat herself, and gave me not half my pitiful share. But if I was hungry, from the beginning I was hungrier for God. If I was full of hate, it was myself I hated most. If I was sorely tempted by the Devil, Who many times offered me all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them if I would but give Him my soul to be His alone, always my hatred of myself saved me from yielding ; for the power He offered me would but have helped me to wreak my spites on others, never my spite against myself. Gazing down into my heart, a cesspool of evil imaginings and hopes of terrible revenge and ambition cruel and mad, I knew that tortures and suffering were needful, that I could never suffer enough. Only thus could Zwan be slain and in his room God come. When I reached my seventh year the woman left me on the roadside to starve, mocking, ' Live your life, my brat : not with me, but with God,' and ran lest the Tsar's police should take her. I stood up in the ditch and spoke so that all the plains could hear me and so that my own voice, ringing in my soul, should ring for ever, ' Sergius, my brat, live your life : *for* God '—Who, from that hour, has cared for me always. But though as I grew older I fought on God's side in the hourly battles in my flesh and soul, the battles with avarice and envy and lust and ambition and revenge, pitched battles that lay waste each body and soul that live, and helped Him to win, yet I could never rout the Enemy utterly. Who stayed always hard by the inner temple of my Soul, the innermost me, the place that aches ; nor were my victories complete enough, nor my self selfless enough, to coax and plead God to make my Soul His permanent habitation, to make me cease to be Zwan and *become Him*.

" Though ever I sought to be righteous, my righteousness was filthy rags. Envy devoured me : envy of wealth, since I had been brought up with never a kopeck to spend ; envy of strength and beauty, for I was a shrivelled dwarf ; of love's happiness, because never in any eyes could I kindle love. And Vanity : of the power I came to find I could wield over others, vanity more vain in that I had always been trodden on and abased ; of blood, because of my lordly bastardy ; of my

brains, because all had mocked at them. Envy, Vanity : Self, self—‘ *That* is the person to spit at ’ I often cried in front of the mirror ; and spat. ‘ Those are the persons to love ’—‘ Who ? ’—‘ All others.’ And more than ever I sought only to live for others. When I served my old Colonel (as he then was) as orderly in the wars in Asia, I risked my life for him and ever sought new ways of risking it. Then at his house, when he gave up the army and settled down, I devoted all my waking hours to that one man I have known who was always kind and never wicked, to the service of the great general, the great and noble general ” (the Generaless wept) “ and now to his beloved widow. I have never feathered my nest, I have no kopeck in the world ; and every rouble note I have earned have given to those poorer, or else, to shame the giver, have torn into shreds : though this was sin as much as virtue, for I took too much pleasure in so doing. I knew my Gospel, and tried to hate no man except his heart was full of hate, no nation unless it hated others. I hated Russia because she is cruel to Poland, and Poland because her heart is full of revenge and because to-morrow, if the wheel turned, she would treat Russia as evilly in return. I sought to love my enemies, but not the enemies of God. I knew what Jesus came into the world to say, that I must love my neighbour as myself and suffer unto seventy times seven.

“ But I had not suffered sufficiently. And was suffering always less. The kindness of the noble General and the noble Generaless, all that affection and honour and glory, was a new snare and hindrance. I prayed that one might do me despite ; I prayed for hurts and ills that would crown and justify my vanity in the Lord’s service, and would so justify my vanity as to take it utterly away. Only when there is no self, no selves at all, will the world become one, regain the state of things that was in the beginning, and there be God only, no separate souls anywhere ; only, *He* said (and I obeyed), if you think more of the sufferings of others. If each soul’s only word and only thought is *Others*, then one day will all souls return to Me. Others, Sergius ; Others.

“ Chiefly then I thought of Christ Jesus, and His agony in the Garden, and His sufferings on the Cross, and the terror He had there, comprehending the sins of the world, all the sins

that had ever been committed, or would be—He knew, knew mystically, they were His and that He had committed them—and of His shame, until my cheeks burned with it ; and, as the saints before me, of His wounds, and I dwelt on them until my feet and hands flamed ; yet never enough, for always in my innermost heart I knew myself unworthy of that favour God had bestowed on others who had experienced the Passion of His Son. Of them, too, I thought, the saints, and of how I was naught beside them, and read of their deeds : of St. Francis, the greatest, who, the day of the Elevation of the Cross on that mountain in the south country ” (he waved his naked arm towards Italy) “ suffered every moment of the Saviour’s shame, hung on Calvary again, until, in the last moment of agony, when his soul was Jesus’ and Jesus’ his, there came sweeping down from Heaven the Angel with six shining wings, wherebetween lay the Saviour, borne to earth for a moment, His hands and His feet nailed to the Cross, on His face the sorrows of time, and the joy of that sorrow ; and the saint, as his heart was nigh to bursting, felt suddenly that through his feet and hands the nails were tearing, and when, after a moment, the Angel flew heavenwards, and his moment of Godhood was over, looking at his shrivelled body he saw there the marks of Jesus : the five divine stigmata. Of all other souls and bodies of all other saints whose sufferings with our Lord had, for an instant, approached His own. Their foreign names are muddling, but I know them as brothers and sisters : Philip of Acqueria ; Nicholas of Ravenna ; Brother Dodo ; great St. Catherine, for women, too, may sometimes attain to God, oftenest when God has put a man’s soul in their woman’s body—just as, with men who are Christ’s saints, not seldom does a woman’s soul inhabit their body ; as in mine, mine, for I, TOO, AM A WOMAN !—great St. Catherine, who felt herself the agony of the five wounds, though none could see them ; Mary of Lisbon, though not until after her death were the sacred marks discovered ; St. Agatha of the Peace, to whom He came as a crucified child ”—I omit, curtail ; remembering not half the trilled names he hagiographed—“ Agnes of Jesus, who saw and felt successively, day in, day out, the agony of the Passion ; St. John of the Cross, who received, not only the wounds, but on whose body pictures of the

Saviour and the Virgin His Mother were imprinted, which our Father of Rome pronounced the Miracle of Miracles. . . .

"I said to myself, 'Zwan, thou art not worthy'; I said to myself, 'In this latter day the Lord vouchsafes this proof no longer'; I said to myself, 'With each pulse or movement of hate in each human heart that lives, man is getting further and further from God; the Universe is splitting up into ever more millions of souls, and the return to the One Soul may never be. God is splitting into a myriad fragments: soon maybe *He will die*. Oh pity!' and seeing that last Dissolution, I quailed, whispering 'Zwan, the miracle is not for thee.' . . .

"Then one night, since the last moon, after my years of struggle and self-hate, I dreamed that I too, if only I could hate myself—hate yourselves, loathe yourselves, little children!—and humble myself *enough*, might be chosen, be branded. For a space of days I kept from all sin in word and deed, each minute driving the Devil to the uttermost edge of my soul; I felt God nearer and nearer; and then, on a sudden, as hate of myself consumed me like a fire, and as I testified for Him to one who knows Him not" (he fixed on Julian his mesmeric eyes) "I saw that his face was not a sinner's—yes, was Hate's, was Sin's itself—no, but a shining angel's. And as he came forward—the outward, this-world him, for within him at that moment was God; though swiftly, as God changed His habitation to me and my last doors opened wide, he was ready for the Devil again—came forward to do me harm, I knew it was God's gift he was laying upon me, and in that moment of shame and humiliation, and wild joy I could scarce abide, shame and humiliation were driven forever from me, Heaven came forever in, and joy is with me always. Fear is fled, and envy, and vanity. I live with the Master. I am free!

"From slave to free, little children, for listen: my eye for purity had always had in it a beam of impurity: I loved what I reviled; even at the last, while I crawled that hedge, my righteousness was filthier than the lovers' sin. Now the uncleanness of my cleanness is departed, and I am pure *in heart*. My longing for sainthood had this flaw: the ambition of holy fame. And now, I have hated these flaws unto their death, and God has made me the humblest of all His saints. And in the struggle for Grandmother's gold that you have been

waging in this house"—truth smote red each listening cheek ; the Generaless shook hysterically : what now would her Saint say ?—" though I knew my side was Christ's, yet my heart was not whole, but reflected, ' It is well to be on the side whose victory's guerdon will be gold : for my sisters and I would together have won, and I longed for victory, the victory of my side, my Self ; and this was evil. Sisters ! " (he turned on his scared allies), " I myself am guilty, and do beg your forgiveness, as already I have won the Lord's. Behold, I do now charge you in His name, abandon your hopes of gold, trample on them, loathe them, slash them : lose the whole world and gain your own souls." He rose unseeing to his feet, his face transfigured ; lifted his arms in naked benediction ; in ravishment pæan'd : " Peace be upon you and mercy. From henceforth let no man trouble me : for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus ! "

And fell forward in triumphant trance, frantically kissing his wounds, and praying, as saints and madmen pray.

There was a moment of terrible, mesmerized silence. Within me I felt a loosening ; selves came apart, had disparate lives, watched what each other did.

One Person in me—all brain, no soul—was worldly-wide-awake enough to eye the Generaless torn between her lovely Saint and the greed his championship whereof had gilded more brightly his halo ; trembling, lost, without rudder or will (or Will) ; half past her wickedness and, with Zwan, along God's road a step ; but half past only, a step only, looking back still at the City of Destruction, and the stocks and the shares, and the houses and the horses and the lands—to espy Grimalkin, whose tight lips and viperish eyes showed that the struggle, if at all, in her soul, if any, had ended for swag not Zwan—to apprehend the staring others.

Self Number Two—soul unencumbered (uncontrolled ?) by body or by brain, or at least most *remotely carnified*—wrought to ecstasy beholding God's possession of Zwan, trembling, stripped of all flesh, famished for the Holy Spirit, awaited within me too the moment, the miracle . . . in beatific phrensy seemed to run forward from my body (the Generaless running too ; against Zwan's limbs our heads near banged

together), knelt, covered the marks with kisses as passionate as Zwan's own ; rose, treading on air ; then headlong fell, for the air was emptiness, world's emptiness, on which my feet pressed down, falling down for ever, with the mad others encircling me, for ever through madness ; with them ; part of them ; *them* ; MAD.

Now a Third Self—the one likest the me who is now writing, central Me, most balanced blending of body, brain and soul—who had been watching the Second's fate, who knew that on the factual plane my body (*i.e.* the English-faced me, the Emmanuel whom the others saw) had not, had not yet, rushed forward, nor bumped against the Generaless' head, nor kissed the feet, and who knew that if Emmanuel the Second did but for an instant get control my body would give way, and those acts would accomplish themselves, and 'I' would be fordone for ever, this Third Self now came uppermost, and struggled for the mastery within me, and, clenching Zwan's rope, drove back to his twilight the Other, and gained sole lordship over myself, saying : 'Down that chasm of madness I will not let thee go.'

Two was thus beaten by Three, and in this-world fact my lips touched not the wounds. But he had his revenge, crying as he faded (through a physically-felt gate within me) into the eternal past, crying unto Three, or rather to the reunited Self in which he was submerged : 'That was the house of God ; the gate of Heaven. It is not madness you missed by not coming through with me, but the peace and glory of God.'

The selves here shifted finally together. I was One. But with a sense of aching emptiness.

I had saved myself from madness. But not from despair. Was Two right ? Had I saved myself perhaps from God ?

From the aching emptiness within (forgotten already that it was 'I' who, to save myself sane, had bidden Him depart) I cried : "Why always wilt Thou visit me but to depart again ?—as the first childhood time, Gipsy Smith time, the day of my soul baptism when I was BORN AGAIN, martyrs' field at Lichfield when Thy heavens opened ?"

Terror His foe, I could not but see, came oftener, stayed longer : Devil's days of my childhood, hours passed in nethermost Hell, the seconds, infinities, when Eternity had clutched

my brain and borne it screaming down the avenues of forever, the sight of King Evil the medium had given me. No, that was not past terror, but present, future, a terror of this self-same year, uncompleted, the most awful, yet to swoop—when? who? Here a shadow like a black curtain began to descend slowly across my brain. *Who?* Not Zwan. That at least I knew. That was one raft of hope in this ocean of darkness around. He was but a fellow wretch, who now had reached Jerusalem.

Evil then was elsewhere ahead. The curtain fell, for a moment blackened all out; groping for my chair I lost the physical world.

A wild voice awoke me crying "Wounds: Marks? Who boasts of them?" I opened my eyes to behold the Grandmother, old witchwife whom during Zwan's tirade no one had heeded, now taking up the burden of her tale; crouching forward from her pillows; fevered, terrible.

"Wounds? Wounds?" she cried. "My old body can show ye wounds enough!" and heedless of their expostulations she tore her nightgown from her shoulders and with maniac laugh pointed exultantly to where, from neck to interspace, in her yellow wrinkled flesh ran a huge scar: the imprint of Holy Russia.

For a while I must have escaped, then found myself back at the threshold where I remember mooning about, just outside the door, racking my brains for some reason that would keep me away for a further moment yet. Why, Seb! Swiftly conscience-stricken, reflecting that the Lord's goodness in choosing my place in the car demanded Christian charity in return, I ran upstairs to his room, where I found him alone, and in an ugly mood. He was sitting up half-dressed, his arm in a sling, mad that the scenes in the other bedroom, of which no doubt the servants kept him informed, were attracting all the public. He had counted much on his hurt; had been sustained, he at once told me, almost from the instant of yesterday's impact, by the thought of what splendid stock-in-trade it would prove: of how he would be the cynosure of all our pitying eyes. "And now"—he squealed with envy—"you are all of you hanging round that thousand-year-old

bitch downstairs and raving about that epileptic dwarf, and can spare only furtive half-minutes for me. Julian slunk in this morning and slunk out again, with never so much as one straight look in the eyes, and Weronika followed : the smirking cat could hardly hide her pleasure in my pain. And now you, the chief cause of my accident——”

“ That’s a lie, and a childish lie : you know you selfishly struggled for the seat——”

“ Your lie is wickeder, for you know you threatened ‘ You may be sorry ’ and prayed that I might be. Eh ? ”

I found no reply.

“ And now you, I repeat, as a sop to your conscience, come graciously to pass a moment with me. Well, as no one else will, you shall help me downstairs, and I will go in among these selfish lunatics—screaming I hear about their marks and their wounds, either purely imaginary or eighty years old if a day, and after two or three generations a wound becomes history, not tragedy—too self-absorbed to give a heed to those who are really suffering, and my God I shall make a noise, more noise than all of them put together. They’ll see ! Come, help me finish to dress.”

I obeyed, getting enjoyment, not out of the twinges of pain which set him ludicrously ‘ Ow ’-ing as I helped him into his garments, but in estimating at each twinge the percentage of pretence, of conscious exploitation, that swelled each groan. The moans were more pity-compelling when (as I could judge) there was no twinge at all, *i.e.*, one hundred per cent of fudge, than when a cut of real pain set pretence a-going : say a mere ninety five.

“ Now put some powder on my face ” he ordered.

I daubed him with *poudre de riz* : sufficiently I thought for gallantry.

But it was for pity, not passion, he sought the powder’s help. “ Here,” as the mirror gave him not pale enough an answer, “ Use some of the talc in that box,” and I daubed anew, till he was ghastly, like a dying clown, and the mirror’s answer pleased him at last. “ That will do. Now take my left arm, and help me downstairs to dear Grannie’s.”

The room was as full and as fetid as ever. I could not distinguish Karol and Weronika, but in compensation there were

two new little men—the rival lawyers—with two new little clerks, esconced on either side of the bed ; one, clearly the lawyer of Mother Church, in converse with the Generaless, who for this all-important moment, this monetary moment, had left her Saint ; the other, whispering to Julian, as clearly the lawyer of Mother Poland. Rival parchments were strewn upon the bed.

Sebastyan's entry was, on the whole, a success. They all looked up and stopped talking : gave him full thirty seconds' attention and glory before returning to their respective vomits. Though I could see it caused him real pain—for he did not moan at all—he waved or rather flapped his wounded arm. " Stigmata, pah ! " he hissed at Zwan, and noticing that the latter's two protectresses were busy concocting evil with their lawyer, broke from me and ran forward to kick him. He just missed him, and was furious ; though not so unhappy as was Zwan to have missed receiving the kick. I dragged Seb away and laid him on a sofa, where he set to and moaned monotonously. Ineffectively too ; the quarrellers around the bed heeded him not. Every now and then a candle or rushlight guttered out. Our shadows took new shapes.

Which most ghoulish of the great masters could best have done justice to that room ? Teniers would have painted the dogs, lank beasts for a wizard's den, and the litter and the crowding ; Zurbarán, passionately, would have fastened on like-named Zwan ; for the crafty grouping around the bed, Hogarth ; for the faces, dead faces, El Greco alone.

Sitting down near Sebastyan I took out from my pocket a newspaper they had sent me from England : YESTERDAY'S CRICKET : LANCS DOING WELL. Was Palatine success a phenomenon in the same physical world as the one around me ? I glanced through the exciting end-of-season results, " all-important," said the paper, " in their bearing on the championship," and said aloud the individual scores, but neither ' hurricane hitting ' of Alletson nor the sound of Rhodes' well-trying willow could drown the mumblings of the half-dead ancient, the whisperings of the vultures around her, the shrill prayers of the saint, the self-conscious groans of Seb, the febrile hubbub everywhere, the madness in my own soul.

Once-sane Weronika rushed in, wild eyed, in tears.

"Julian, Julian! Karol has kissed me on the mouth, and I shall have a baby, a baby, a baby! The marks are on my mouth!" and flung herself sobbing at her brother's feet.

The marks.

Nobody laughed.

Across the bed Julian spoke to his mother. "She's your child" he said.

"Love your enemies" called Zwan.

And remembering at long last that the gentle terrified girl too was out of her vaunted womb, the Generaless Tanska went over to her, kissed her on the forehead, drew her up, took her—ar first resisting, clinging to her brother, her one sure human in the world—maternally aside, and in whispers unfolded to her the story of flesh and blood, reassured her, dried her tears.

What would they say to Karol, I was wondering, naughty Karol? Distracted Julian seemed to be wondering the same thing, cudgelling his courage for a 'later-on' expostulation with his cousin.

Zwan was triumphing on his mat: "New sin, new infamy! —But no, no! Daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Now Jan the butler hurried into the room, threading his way through us, crying something to his master. While yet he was speaking, there followed two other of Julian's servants, endeavouring, but in vain, to prevent the incursion into the over-peopled room of a new band of visitors: three Russian soldiers (or gendarmes: with my special experience I should better have known one from the other) followed by three hideous Jews, led by the hero of our yesterday's adventure.

Julian started angrily to his feet, then checked himself, remembering that to Russians he could have nothing to say; could not curse them even for breaking into a bedroom in his house, since he, if a prince, was a Pole, and they, though moujiks, were his masters. There fell amid the madness a silence. Even Seb stopped moaning and Zwan sainting. All the hateful hating humans stared at each other. Grand-mother sat sharply up. Her yellow eyes peered; at last shaped out the uniform.

She gave a horrible cry: "The Russians! To arms!

Upon them ! ” her face inhuman with hate ; strove to rise, could not, fell back among her pillows, faintly moaning “ They have wounded me,” and put her hand to her ancient cicatrice, which burned afresh across the years ; for she cried as though in new pain. Then with superhuman effort she pulled herself up again and broke out into fearful curses on Russia and all her ways. None of them, not even Zwan screeching “ Love your enemies,” could stop her mouth. The soldiers darkened as the old woman poured vitriol on their country and Tsar : “ To Hell with him ! To Hell with him, the brutal Samoderjetz of Petersburg.” It was an ugly moment : the terrible face—and the danger. Was a bedroom ‘ Order reigns in Warsaw ’ near at hand ?

At this juncture, luckily, the Jews pressed forward. Luckily ? Now the whole body of them—Julian and Weronika, Generaless and Canoness, both bands alike—seemed to be swarming around the Israelite trio, and I had a sickening notion that they were seeking not to shove them back from the bed but to *push them nearer*.

Nearer, dear Grannie, to thee !

If beholding the Russians had brought her into so dangerous a condition, beholding the Jews might well—.

But the plan, though a good one, was tried a moment too late. Before she could see the Accursed, she fell back insensible on the pillows.

Now, swinging from devils to saints, they all sought to save her, and rushed to her side. In a cracked feminine voice Seb struck up a song.

Meanwhile the Jews continued to shuffle nearer, and the soldiers, their hirelings, stood back to let them speak.

To call in one set of his masters and play them off against the other is indeed the Jew’s only chance of obtaining justice, or anything, just or unjust, he may want. The soldiers had clearly been promised a fat share of what the old Jew had come to claim for his horse ; they nudged him to get on with the business.

It was the costliest horse in all the Empire, it appeared.

The old wretch, with his black smock, and filthy black curls, now took the middle of the stage. He bowed and scraped, and repeated endlessly that pedlar’s gesture of greed and

cringing humility and secret power which the enemies of Israel have always depicted, the while he recounted the most marvellous qualities of the defunct mare—for they had had to shoot her on the road the night before, to put her out of misery—her beauty (she was black and beautiful), her sire, her dam ; how, at a horse fair, he had given the savings of a lifetime to purchase her, how she was his stock-in-trade, his source of livelihood, his one stay, his all, the bright hope and comfort of his penurious old age. Every ecstatic sentence was punctuated by a figure—and by recovering Grandmother's groans, coughs and pantings—but each time higher than the time before ; I knew my Polish numbers. And now she was dead, killed through the brutality of the rich Polish seigneurs—this in a cringing aside to the Russians—who drove along in these terrible new engines of theirs, at the risk of the lives and the property of others, humble Jew and noble Russian alike.

"How much?" broke in Julian resignedly, taking out his notecase.

"Four hundred roubles, great prince, not a kopeck less ; and that will be ruin."

The money passed.

Julian had paid quickly, without unlordly chaffering, reckoning that in sheer delight the Jews would at once depart. Not they ! Emboldened, rather, to hopes of fresh plunder from pockets of greenhorn prince, they stayed on, leering over the end of Grandmother's bed, casting about for some pretext for further extortion.

Sebastyan supplied it. In the interval of Israel's hesitation he resumed his moaning, and began wriggling about on his sofa in pain, or play-actor's pain. "I can beat that," thought Ikey, and took off his filthy smock, and a horrible rag of a shirt besides, displaying a greasy arm, adorned with bruise and gash, un-Christian stigmata : his own toll, he whimpered, in yesterday's collision. As Sebastyan had hoped his to be marketable, coin to purchase pity and petting, so the Jew, and with greater success, used his also to get what his soul most longed for : cash. Apart from his suffering—he grimaced ably—it was worth thirty roubles, what with doctor and medicine and so on.

"As though Jews needed doctors" sneered Sebastyan.

Thirty roubles passed. After consultation in some jargon of their own (Yiddish I suppose) they appeared to decide among themselves that that was all there was to be done for to-day, and bowing low to each single one of us in turn, they moved backwards towards the door. The Russian corporal accepted a little consideration for himself and his subordinates, and quickly ran out to start plundering their allies. I was curious enough to follow them to the door, and saw that already on the way to the kitchens, where the soldiers had decided to offer themselves drinks, the battle over the spoils had begun. The Russians were twisting the old man's arms. . . .

I came back into the room, where now it was the turn of the lawyers, whose patience, they seemed meekly to be protesting, was a little tried. Across the bed and body there soon raged an ultimate war of words and gestures surpassing anything I had ever, or still have ever, seen. The Polish words were too fast and furious for me to follow, but some were French; and for the rest, sight needed the help of no other sense. Hate, spite, greed, rage, triumph flitted from face to face. Weronika was the most vehement and the Canoness the most envenomed. Both sides seemed to be holding out for the complete surrender of the other: the Whole Will or nothing.

"Halve it, say I," sneered Sebastyan to me in English, 'and give me a commission for my suggestion.'

Two of the hounds began fighting. Seb resumed his insolent humming of Auld Lang Syne. Zwan was scratching his stigmata.

Grandmother they pulled from side to side like a marionette. A sticky sound would emerge from her lips: whoops of joy from one party. A new mumbling: the erstwhile triumphers gnash their teeth and the downcast of a minute before hold up their gloating heads: God had spoken, His enemies were scattered.

The axis round which the war rotated now shifted from Ostowska to Tanska, for into the latter's ears Zwan, who got up from his mat and leaned across the end of the bed to be near her, began pouring out (in Russian) a stream of exhortation and hypnotic prophecy. The wretched woman, rent in

twain, moaned and gasped, and her lips moved in hysterical prayer. "All that thou hast!" cried Zwan.

Zwan won. To the dismay of her priest and her lawyer, and the white anger of Grimalkin her daughter, who hissed in her face, she seized the parchment that stood in her favour and tore it into shreds.

I remember trying to gather my wits that I might focus my impressions. I looked at them one by one, sought to decide which was the maddest, to consider, sanely if I could, if any were sane. My eyes rested longest on Julian's face, which alone was noble. He, at least, for all his weakness, was a friendly and, as a rule, normal man. Yet he was bewitched, somehow bewitched. His visit to Oxford had been part of some witchcraft; the strange conditions he had laid down which, in some stranger way, had been predestined for me, were witchcraft; Quince was witchcraft; Nellie was witchcraft; I was witchcraft and all the world. In a drunken moment, in my brain, all my past and my future rolled together, and the past and the future of the worlds, and the blood and the fears and the thoughts of every one that had ever been or would be, the apes we have been and the viler apes we shall become, the Beginning without Beginning, the End without End, and the trillion dead worlds and to be born. . . .

When I came back to my place in this world—returning more quickly, more consciously, more *self-reliantly* than the times before—I found strength of will and body to rush headlong from that den, out into the open, seeking God's air. For an hour, maybe, across field and meadow I ran. Nor, when I got back to the house late that evening, dead-tired, dead-sane, would I heed a message from the Grandmother, borne by Morawski (who was congratulating himself that among greater events his own little escapade had been overlooked), expressing the hope that I would come to see her again. That first three hours' visit to her den should be, and for ever, my last.

I spent the next two or three days taking long walks alone or with Karol, or driving in the car.

On one of these motor outings—we must have been a very long way from Praz—I noticed a cart coming towards us, in

it the usual Jew, like any other. As we drew nearer the Jew stood up in the cart, and began servilely bowing to me.

It was our Jew, our own. He flung a rug over his horse, but not quite in time, for a few patches and scratches revealed who that dear horse—or mare rather—was, and that the four hundred roubles had gone, not for the purchase of her successor, since successor none she had, nor for flowers for her undug grave, but rather into the pockets of Israel: and of course Mother Russia, though in what proportions I shall never know.

Before I could guess what he was doing, Emile savagely turned the steering-wheel, and banged the car into the old mare's body.

"Stigmata for her," he laughed brutally.

The beast fell, the Jew howled, Emile backed the car, I hated him now for ever, and we drove on.

CHAPTER XV : HARVEST HOME —THE LORD'S

Now comes a moment of respite.

I divided my time between my books and the fields, chiefly the fields ; dodged fellow humans.

Julian hearkened to Seb's prayer to be sent to Warsaw ' for an operation,' wholly unnecessary, and for which of course Julian paid. We were Seb the less. Grandmother still managed to keep alive, mainly for a reason of which I will speak. Zwan stayed sainting in her chamber. As no pleas would coax me again across that threshold, I at any rate was *them* the less. Then Julian, cheered by his Grandmother's recovery not less than by that final testamentary turn in his favour, was peaceful company again, at moments gay ; while Weronika, now that she knew that a meed of friendliness, including even an occasional friendly peck, was fraught with no cosmic consequences, became even friendlier ; quite altogether friendly in fact. *Altogether*. (I cannot, Miss Manhattan, help it ; you should not live such leagues away.)

That the general improvement was for a large part due to the change within Zwan I am certain. There are many who would dismiss that change as merely pathological and, for what such words are worth, they may be right. But I would answer : After darkness light, and add : By their fruits ye shall know them. Zwan's fruits were there to behold and taste : a new happiness in all around him (except as touching one wholly evil, the viperish Canoness, who had departed for Austria hissing rage and spite at us all, most of all at her two ex-allies, her mother and her saint) ; in all of us better natures on top ; and, fruit if angular most luscious : a Generaless transformed.

In these first days of her new life she was her old violent self on one subject only, for it affected Zwan's honour : the date of the Harvest Home.

In that part of Poland the crowning of Nature's year is the chief festival of the peasants' year also : more important even than Easter. Julian and his sister were determined that the Home should take place on September the 4th (fall of the Second Empire), the Grandmother's one hundredth birthday (who was born before fell the First). The old lady, they said, shared their enthusiasm for the project. If still alive, she had sworn somehow to get up, somehow to greet the villagers and her own new century, erect at the portals of the house where she was born. The hope kept her heart beating.

But the Lord in this latter day had sent to their house a prophet, and in piety and thankfulness all honours should be for him and his God. The Generaless therefore favoured the 10th, Saint Sergius', Zwan's saint-day. Julian and Weronika would not hear of it. The Generaless blustered, said that by the 4th the harvest would not be in and that to celebrate it then would be to mock at nature ; while to slight His saints was to mock the Lord. Well, if they held out they would see. Sergius might see to it with his Maker, Who was the maker too of rain. No, that was wrong ; she should not have said that, Sergius would reprove her for having said that. Still, did they want the Home ruined by thunder and tempest ?

"The 10th !" she cried, "the Saint's Harvest Home !"

"The Devil's !" shouted Weronika back, little knowing how she prophesied aright.

Julian for once was adamant. For the 4th it was decided.

(I find in my diary : ' Am 80 per cent a partisan of the 4th, 20 per cent. of the 10th.')

But would the old lady hold out till then ? Her age was ninety nine years and three hundred and fifty six days. Nine days to go, and the doctor declared she lived but from hour to hour.

I had daily tidings, through one and another, from the bed-chamber. Karol said that Saint and Grandmother appeared to be on the best of terms, he praying all day and half the night that she might see the century. "Though he's up to something, I've no doubt."

"Up to what ? ", defending him.

"Well, this agitation the Generaless is setting on foot among the more superstitious of the peasants to have the

Harvest Home put off till the 10th. She herself mayn't even be aware of it, but do *you* seriously believe the bug is innocent of inspiring her ? ”

“ I do, and I don't believe he knows there is any such agitation.”

“ Ah. What did I say your first evening here ?—another Zwanophile ! Well, it doesn't matter. Julian's mind is made up, and as to the peasants, they love the old lady more, and the 4th it will be.

As I said, I was spending my days in the fields, and was peacefuller therefor. Not that Nature has ever been more than a mirage to me, who know that the only reality is within our tormented souls ; but the colours of the mirage may sometimes be comely to look at, and the illusion for our souls grateful. Nor that I gained, from my days with the harvesters, any inward apprehension of what they were doing. I saw the rows of men scything, their women who followed reaping, the children who came last gleaning smaller bundles the women had scorned ; I felt dimly that this toil of the makers of bread had an ancient glory of its own, at least for me their idle watcher. But, townsman, curious of man's war with the supernatural, incurious wholly of his ceaseless war with Nature, I saw them as a picture only. The scythes swept, the women stooped, the children gathered ; the sickles swished, the flails throbbed. All this perennial toil and movement and sound was man's battle with Nature for bread. ‘ Don't merely say that : apprehend it totally.’ I could not ; it was a picture only, as peaceful and unreal as the souls of men are not.

But I was refreshed for the coming battle of my own.

Guests began to arrive for the celebration of Grandmother's birthday, though Julian's hope that she would, at the jubilee moment, rise, stand up and triumph was kept secret from them. They imagined, I suppose, a muffled procession to the bedside, a handkiss, a compliment, a patriotic murmur, an awkward exit—and away.

By the eve of the great date the house was full : one or two relatives, neighbours who lived too far away to drive in next morning, representatives of a few great families and of certain

patriotic organisations. The kitchens worked overtime. Excitement almost healthy was in the air.

The morrow's programme was ready. First we should all hear Mass in the village church ; then, during the peasants' traditional ceremony before their march to the castle, the lord and his friends would return to the house and make ready to receive them. Julian said that his Grandmother was born ten minutes after noon on the fourth of September a century ago (Battle of the Nations gathering, Bonaparte near his end, Poland with him). Dinner, therefore, must be early, so that toast-drinking would come at that identical moment ; in which also the church bells would chime one hundred peals.

" And then ? " queried the guests.

" Then, if she is well enough, one by one you will go to her room with your congratulations and good wishes "—knowing, or at least hoping, that this was a lie.

The morning dawned dismal. There was soaking rain, as the Generaless had been cheerfully foretelling ; under her breath.

" How is the Countess ? " I whispered to Weronika, who smiled for reply.

When we trooped to Mass the grey blanket of cloud was lifting. The little church, decorated with wheat and flowers, looked like an English church on Harvest Festival Sunday ; but gayer. For there were banners, and crowding peasants dressed for the day in gorgeous traditional fashion ; kerchiefs of bright green and red and orange about the heads of the womenfolk, and in the hats and around the throats of the men. Church was merry and the people sang.

After Mass, Julian and his guests returned at once to the house. Karol stayed with me, as I wanted to witness the ceremony that would precede the harvest-procession to the chateau.

After a last song of praise to God, all the people swarmed out into the village street. The girls joined hands, made a circle, and in ring-a-ring-o'-roses fashion tripped round ; the young men made a bigger circle round them, but stood still to stare, enjoy and appraise ; an outside circle of old folk and children looked on at both. After the girls had shown their paces and completed the circle a score of times, a name ran

round the masculine ring, ever more loudly and enthusiastically, till its owner, a slim tan-faced maiden with laughing eyes and lovelier mouth, broke hands with her comrades and came radiant towards the men, going once round the male circle ; then, more radiant still, as women are who choose, and glory and abound in their choice, took by the hand the one she favoured, a stocky young peasant with handsome peaceful face. With a diadem of wheat bedecked with flowers and multicoloured ribbons he crowned her Queen of the Harvest. Then all swarmed back into the church, the favoured couple leading. The girl laid her crown on the altar and the priest—my friend the gambling village priest with whom I talked Latin at Sunday afternoon ten-kopec-a-hundred *bézique*—blessed it and her and her boy.

Out in the street again, the men put a cock on top of the crown : a fussy restive cock. The signs are these : if the cock crows, all are glad, as this means that the lord will receive them and that next year's harvest will be good ; if he is silent, every one fears that the lord will give them a cold welcome ; while if to silence he adds refusal to peck at the crown's jewels, the ears of wheat, gloom is doubled, for all know that not only will the lord be sullen, but next year's harvest will be bad.

Karol had hardly time to tell me this, I had hardly time to wonder what occasion the dear Generaless might have had of tampering with the bird—of prefeeding him to satiety, or enfeebling with shrewd knife his voice—when he crowed most lustily, and all the people cheered.

A procession formed, and two by two, first the King and Queen, then the girls, then the boys, then the married couples, and last the children and old people, the whole village moved gaily along the high road to the castle gates. Karol and I took the short cut back through the churchyard, so as to be at the house when they should arrive.

All the guests and all the servants, with Weronika, but no others of the household that for two months (two lives) I had known, were assembled on the steps. In front of the house, on the grass, trestle-tables stood loaded with good things : roast sides of oxen, fowls and geese and pies ; beer and vodka and brandy.

Despite the Generaless, the sun was now shining forth. We could hear, and soon along the avenue see, the gay advancing cortege. They came right up to us, stood facing us, staring ; the humbler mob of the two, the happier.

The young Harvest King stepped forward, bowed, made a pretty speech ; then led the singing :

“ Open ye gates of the Castle ! We have garnered the corn from the master's fields and bound it in rich sheaves, countless as the stars in heaven. We have bound a thousand sheaves for the master, a thousand for his lady sister, five thousand for his wife to be, ten thousand for his sons and daughters (two there will be of each !), fifty thousand for his guests, and one million for the gold of the English at Danzig : the gold of the English at Danzig.

“ Come forth, O Lord ! Come forth from the white walls of thy castle, and take the crown from the maiden. It is the crown of crowns, it is of pure gold and not of corn : pure gold and not of corn.

“ Let us enter thy palaces ! For our heads are burnt by the sun, our hands are scarred by the sickle, our knees are broken with bending to the earth, our feet are cut by the stubble and our backs are stiff from stooping over thy wide fields.

“ Let beasts' blood flow, O Lord ! Let it flow in streams over the greensward of thy courtyard. Let fires be lit to the four winds of heaven, for most powerful remedy is needed to rest the harvesters from their labours.

“ Remember, O Lord ! A roast ox is a wonderful balm for an aching spine, a sheep for broken knees, a calf for weary feet, a goose, a cock and a duck for scarred hands, beer and brandy for a head burnt by the sun.

“ O Lord, conceal thyself no longer ! We hear a mighty wind blowing from Cracow : it parts the curtains at the windows of thy castle and reveals thy face, bright as the sun now shining in the sky ; and the countenance of the great princess, thy dear father's mother dear, like a radiant star ; who is older than half the stars.

“ Come ! The curtains are parted. Come ! ”

On the last harmonious summons a silence fell. We on the steps looked behind us, understood, beheld, parted aside, with beating hearts made way, as through the door, towards the front between us, came Julian, and on his arm, leaning lightly, wearing her Amazon's uniform, ill-fitting faded rags, with ancient battle scythe for staff ; erect, grotesque, victorious : the Grandmother.

A great shout greeted her. Then the whole village rushed forward like a herd and fought to kiss her hands, her tunic, her boots. Battling for their turn, most of the guests did likewise. I did not ; for this occasion, though moved, stayed

sane and 'English,' who had that other day near kissed Zwan's wounded feet.

This tribute and turmoil over, they seated her on a chair. She distributed prizes to the best harvesters: silk kerchiefs, belts, knives, and to the Queen of the Harvest a great casket of bonbons bought in Warsaw.

Then the meal; all of us, peasants and guests, feasted together in the sun. Our table was the first for pretty girls; the fact that Emile and Karol were at it endorsed the judgment of my eyes. At the end of half an hour of hard feeding, watches were consulted, excitement grew.

Then the bell pealed (oh wretch who stayed behind to toll it), and at the hundredth peal we all stood up and drank the eternal's health with gulps and shouts and cheers. 'To the second hundred' was the cry that found most favour, and soon we were all shouting it together.

She stood up, a little unsteadily, and in a low voice spoke, Julian calling each sentence after her for all to hear: "Friends and people, thank you. The Lord's harvest is bounteous; thank Him. Till the world ends He will send harvests. This is the last my eyes will see. But as I die, God tells me this: this is the last your eyes will see without hope of happier days. I am dying and I say it is the last. Friends, thank you." She fell back into the arms of Julian and Weronika, who carried her into the house.

We cheered. Who of us—not I, for one—believed her dark saying? Who of us did not ignore, smile at, forget it? Yet next harvest-time heard the guns sounding, and (the need was sore) the Grand Duke Nicholas proclaiming Freedom.

The rest of that day was riotous. Eating soon ceased, but not drinking. I remember that about the hottest time of the afternoon I was still at that table with three girls; I can still see myself, and at least two of them—or maybe 'twas only one, who kept moving—quite clearly; I swear to it, will always swear. Yet—though from that fair table I had never moved—when next, about seven in the evening, I happened to look up, I found I was on the piano stool in the dining-room, in posture most comfortless, my head and torso across the keyboard of the Bechstein grand.

Torchlit supper in front of the house; a great bonfire

lighting its walls to wonder ; and, around the blaze, dancing. The ball was opened by Julian with the lissom queen and Weronika with the placid unsobber young king. The fun was fast and furious, the fiddlers untiring : polkas, mazurkas, krakoviaks ; polkas again. Sad sight for teetotalers and snobs : how soon Comrade Liquor overbore the barriers of caste. Most of the house party were dressed up : as peasants, clowns, kings. Prince C., one of the half-dozen greatest landowners in Europe—there !—wore rabbits' ears bedecked with ears of corn, March Hare for all to start ; two of the ladies were garbed as boys, Emile and myself as peasant girls. (I have the photograph still, and but for large unfeminine feet am a maid most alluring.)

Dancing and prancing were indiscriminate. Of all the Nine I know Terpsichore least, but woo'd her that night in twenty pairs of arms, Weronika's and Julian's, housemaids' and housewives', stable boys', harvesters.' Beyond the dancers' greensward, in the trees, beyond the fringe of the torches, the outer darkness was littered with recumbent forms, not always (alas !) alone. Zwan all night as all day was nowhere to be seen, contemplating no doubt in the monkly cell Generaless had had garnished for him in the dungeons ; though kinder, more catholic now, he might have surveyed the scene with a Christian charity new. What hedges to crawl that night !

At midnight, as the villagers were beginning to take a glad and tipsy farewell, on the balcony, like a great ghost and a little one, appeared, flanked by torches, the Saint and his Adorer.

The latter called shrilly for silence, then made a speech to us all, recounting her Master's joy (and *contrite* hers) at the success of 'Grandmother's Day,' and explaining how he the Master had waited till midnight struck before appearing, so that throughout that day he should have been for less than nothing. Now he would give the people a Message.

She stood him on a chair. He lifted his hands in benediction, and all went down on their knees. Surveying the prostrate shapes that flickered in the torchlit night, he solemnly intoned : "Love ye one another."

Superfluous advice surely.

Next we of the house party went for a torchlight picnic in the Great Forest ten versts away. There were two carriage

loads of us, and food and champagne to outweigh us all. Servants bearing torches rode on horseback beside us.

At the heart of the forest we halted. In the midnight loneliness, we lopped branches and collected brushwood, clearing the space and gathering the fuel for a second great bonfire round which we danced till dawn.

Grey return through the already autumned forest. The cart jolted along the woodman's track between high mist-screened tree-walls. I was sitting by Julian in the second and sleepier of our two carriages: for the other cartload still sang brazenly. Two of the landowner-guests were quarrelling sleepily about the education of the peasants: eternal question and answer, far away, like a lullaby.

"It's been a great day, I think?" whispered Julian in my ear, "though perhaps it is foolish to make so much of anniversaries. Isn't it rather——, you know what I mean? Nevertheless, a year, the period it takes our world to encircle her mother, and a month, not calendar month but lunar, the time it takes our daughter-moon to make her magic circle round us—are spaces of time perhaps to which something in us, children of the moon, grandchildren of the sun, answers. When I see future things, oftenest they come true an exact moon or year afterwards."

'Rot,' I thought to myself. 'It is true,' I thought to myself. Though when, at a later moment, I read that it was in the evening, and on the last day of July, that the sheepish Count de Pourtales, Kaiser's Ambassador, handed to Sazonoff the scrap of paper that spelt ten million dead, and looked at my Praz journal and recalled the selfsame hour and date the year before, when Julian, sitting on my bed (I had a touch of the flue) near dinner time, in passionate prophecy I mocked at had foretold the War, and snatched some paper or other that lay on my bedside pedestal and handed it to me, thrust it at me, saying, "Look, I declare war!" ; then I decided that 'Rot' had been the stupider reflection of the two.

"I wonder?" I replied vaguely, "I've just begun the third moon of my stay with you, and am sad to think of it. I seem to have been here all my life. In a week or two I must be going, you know. I must be back in Oxford for the beginning of October."

The last sentence was plain fact and sense ; yet rang in my own ears like madness. *Oxford*—what did it mean ?

“ You’re going away ? ” he repeated ; it was news from some other world. Then, quickly : “ We must take that motor-trip first. Grandmother will live weeks yet, yesterday has given her years ; and the weather at last is fine. To-morrow we will motor to Warsaw—Seb’s in a nursing-home and we can dodge him—and spend a day or two there for you to see it properly as you weren’t able to last time, and then beyond——”

Beyond ? And why dodge Seb ? For fear he might ‘ Ha, ha, ha ! ’ ?

CHAPTER XVI: WARSAW—THE LAST WARNING

The ride to the capital was physically eventless. No Jew, no mare ; no shafts, no shrieks.

"Where exactly are we going after Warsaw?" near the end of the journey I asked, knowing my question well, having prepared, improved, rehearsed it for a trembling hour. "In what direction exactly? To what towns?"

"Wherever you like," he replied from far away, not meaning it, possessed: "though I'd suggest the south-west—Galicia way—near the Austrian frontier. There's more to see."

"Are we going to visit your—brother?"

His eyes I could not fix. "Ah, they've told you about him. Yes, we *might*——"

"Must!" I cried, clutching his arm as the car sped on, and Emile's ears twitched artfully to listen.

"'Must' then," he whispered. "You know. Pray."

And as the stubble fields flashed by I prayed as the lost pray, offering God a life of virtue and devotion undreamt of, offering nothing as nothing I had, and begging Him to pity my nakedness and kiss my empty trembling hands, to save my soul which had sought not to be summoned from the void.

With my lips I prayed ; often I screamed within.

Fatigue in the end calmed me, and the warm backwash of returning hope after the furthest waves forward into the Terror. Here were the suburbs of the capital.

As on the occasion of our first visit, Julian put me up at the Polonia Palace, himself staying at his flat. My apartment was a pleasant one on the third floor, with carpet of that inmost red hotels monopolise, balcony overlooking the central street, and white locked door communicating apparently with the next chamber. The little pliant on which I unpacked my

bag was against this door. Distinguishing a voice behind it I paused, slippers in hand, to listen ; a voice (the folly of it) that I knew, but whether man's or woman's, and whose, I could not decide or remember. " You are beautiful," it said, in English.

What don, what deacon, had I caught ? With what zest I glued my ear to that door, as you dear Reader, would have glued, to glean the antiphone this sweet phrase must provoke. Silence : more expressive than sound. I pictured the deed, dearer than words, with which the fair phrase was being repaid. Then again, rackingly familiar, rackingly unguessed, the same voice, same phrase, same thanks—or disdain ?—unuttered. The open window ! I muffled the faint voice of decency somewhere far away within me, leaned over the rail that parted my balcony from the next, peered famine-eyed into the neighbouring room—and beheld, in ravished posture before the wardrobe mirror : Narcissus Sebastyan Lelewel.

Amaze at coincidence, delight voyistic, swift shame, withdrawal, reflection. Had not Julian, who had believed Seb to be in a nursing-home, told me that at all costs he wished to avoid him ? There was no danger, he had added ; nursing-home patients may not stroll abroad. Unless Julian had been lying, and this propinquity was some plot of his. But lying to what end ?

Not coincidence, nor plot : but hallucination. As the Lichfield-born movement approached its climax, and I had but twenty days in Poland and yet knew, with the noetic sureness of the damned, that I should not, could not, escape, the sense of whether what I saw around me was happening or not grew dimmer. Reality and hallucination, always near together, grew *consciously* nearer, for fugitive instants merged.

There was no sound in the next room now, nor voice, nor least movement, though I strained my neurotic ears. Over the balcony, however, for sight to confirm hearing, I dared not peer again.

In the end, twenty one years of comparative sanity overbore six months of folly, and my brain decided that what my ears had heard they had heard, what my eyes had seen they had seen. I ran out of the room and down the stairs, and asked a servant to get me Prince Julian Lelewel on the telephone.

"Tell me, where is Sebastyan?"

"In a private nursing-home here in Warsaw. Why? You don't want to visit him? In fact I'd ask you——"

"No, no. But unless I'm mad, or unless it's some joke of yours, or even if it is, I believe I saw him going into the bedroom next to mine in this hotel ten minutes ago." Half-lie for half-hallucination. "Is it a mad joke? Did you know?"

"No, my God. If you're not playing a mad joke on me—are you?"

"No."

"Then it's true. It wouldn't be the first time Master Seb's done that; cadged pity-money and used it as pleasure-money. But no matter. Look here, do this: go down at once and ask the manager the name of the guest in that room. If it's Seb, then telephone me at once; then run up to your bedroom and if you've already unpacked your bag, repack it quickly, and then—clear out of the hotel. Meanwhile I'll 'phone the management and put it right about your leaving, and send Emile round in the car to fetch you. He'll have the car on the far side of the square, where Seb wouldn't see it and will drive you to the Bristol where I'll be waiting for you to fix you up there for the night. Don't at any cost be seen by Seb. Keep your face low, turn down your hat——"

With what speed the fear of three *Ha's* and their preventive influence on our 'trip' had produced a plan un-Julianishly clockwork and complete.

'S. Lelewel' hotel book showed, hotel clerk uttered. Hallucination too? But this, stark and real before my eyes, was not: coming down the last stairs, catching me as I was entering the lift: Sebastyan.

He greeted me effusively, apprehending that though caught out himself he had in some way caught me out too. I had not had even the needful half-second to prepare my face. "Where's Julian?"

I must be sane, I reflected, as, stared at in the lift, accompanied inevitably to my room, I could summon no lie, could not even conceal that I had been taken unawares.

Seb installed himself comfortably in my armchair.

Meanwhile Julian at his flat was waiting for my call. Oh

poor imagination, oh fetid!—I adjourned to a neighbouring place. Here I could at least think unstared at, and from here, instead of returning to my room, could bolt downstairs to telephone. Not I! Seb was up to my privy games, was standing concealed in the corridor outside, witnessed my dash to the stairhead, arrested me with gleeful cry.

Perforce I returned to my chaperoned bedroom; there burst out childishly: "Why to God are you following me about like this?"

He smiled and rubbed his hands for joy: "To see the man you want to see, of course."

There was a knock at the door; the valet appeared, and in some language or other which Seb (the wretch) interpreted, informed me there was a telephone call for me. I went downstairs, escorted to the very receiver.

Explanations and lies were alike difficult; in answer to Julian's heated query why I had not rung him up before I said merely: "Sebastyan is here, standing by me. Vous comprenez? Come round," and hung up the receiver.

A few minutes later hate reigned in my bedroom. Julian, who had at last made up his mind to break with his cousin, to throw off the costly yoke of blackmail, forced hospitality and forced loans, was enraged by this latest malingering trick, enraged still more that Seb should break in on our little 'trip,' enraged as I had seen him but once, when, divine, he had bestowed the stigmata. Seb, for his part, knew he was up against it, had known it already at Praz through Grimalkin who had been eavesdropping the day Julian had told Karol his mind was made up, but knew it more surely now as he looked at his cousin's face. They were white and savage. Their gestures were actors' on a stage, though the words, the threats and counter-threats, Polish and hurricane-swift, I could not gather. Julian, mad with passion, lifted his arm to strike; I already visualized hagiology enriched by a new Saint Sebastyan.

But he aspired not to sainthood, and at the first sight of physical danger backed towards and wriggled through the door, escaping to his room—and I hope mirror.

"Let us get away from Warsaw" said Julian authoritatively, "that is—hush, we must talk low, already he'll be

listening—that is, unless you specially want a day or two to see it.”

“ I do ” I said, speaking as firmly as I thought decent—after all he was the paymaster—“ that is, unless you specially want to leave at once.”

He gave in, as his weaker will and the play of the words made probable ; admitted that for a couple of days Seb did not matter : Emile and the servant at the flat would have their orders.

Next day I hardly saw either Julian, who had business to do, or Seb, who was chasing him about. I had a day alone with Warsaw.

It is not a very interesting place. I had imagined it more Eastern-European-looking ; it is in fact no more so than the older quarters of Breslau. Save for the numberless Russian soldiers in the streets and the giant Orthodox cathedral—blue and golden, Muscovite, flaunting—one was in the west. The capital of a conquered people, yet hardly the conquerors’. In the gardens and chief streets the upper-class women were slender and lovely. I wandered for an hour in the ghetto.

Visited a book-shop where Julian had told me that, despite frequent descents by the Russian police, works on the Polish question were to be had. I explained in French what I sought. The man hesitated, asked himself if I was a spy, was finally persuaded that I was not, and sold me the books I wanted : *La Question Polonaise*, by Roman Dmowski (now, autumn 1923, Prime Minister), and some criminal others.

“ Monsieur is French ? ”

“ English.”

He showed surprise : comprehensible surprise, if one reflects that before the War there was probably no great city in the world where our ubiquitous race was so little in evidence. (During my months in Poland I never saw a single compatriot.)

“ What do they think of Poland in England ? ” he asked eagerly.

“ They don’t, I’m afraid. Though most of us have heard of it.”

“ And Polish books ? Our modern Polish literature ? ”

“ *Quo Vadis* ? ”

He smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," defensively, "are you Poles familiar with our modern English literature? Tell me the names, if any, of the two English books you sell most."

"That's easy. Dawid Copperfield and Portret Doriana Graya."

I smiled and shrugged my shoulders.

I found the Holy Cross with the cold bust of Chopin, and in the underchurch his heart; heard Mass in the Russian Cathedral, watching the far-away popes on the altar, bearded gnomes in white, unaware of the cold tinsel sarcophagus in which they were entombed; stared at the shops and the soldiers, the palaces, the passers-by.

In the evening, Seb's mincing flank was turned, and Julian took me to the theatre. We had seats in the seventh row of the stalls, the first row to which inhabitants of the country were admitted, as the front six were set apart for the Russian soldiery; victors railed off from the vanquished. Officers clanked noisily in throughout the piece. Not that on this particular night this particular frightfulness much mattered, as the play, *Sumurun*, was entirely in dumb-show.

Afterwards we had supper and visited one or two night clubs and dancing places, seedy caricatures of their Parisian sisters. At one of them there were songs in seven different languages; in all of which seven, I reflected, Seb no doubt sang perfectly. Then to Julian's flat, where tired and tipsy I made half-hearted efforts to bring the talk round to our 'trip'; and, failing, to Sebastyan.

"I've heard a good deal from Karol," I said, "but you yourself tell me now about Seb. What is he really like? What is the real reason he sticks to you like a leech? And why have you now determined at all costs not to see him?"

"He's a liar, swindler, cadger, wastrel, spendthrift, ingrate, thief, cheat, degenerate, prig" (and other words). "When he'd spent a couple of fortunes in Germany he came back to Poland to suck dry all his relatives and friends who had any kindness in their hearts and any money in their pockets. One after another they lost patience, flung him a last hundred roubles and slammed the door. I'm the last, the biggest fool: and leeches like fools' blood; it seems it tastes sweeter. What do you think? His hold over me isn't really blackmail; I've

no past or present worth paying to hide. I've given him money merely to buy peace—*peace*, PEACE!—and that he's never given me. Now I'm going to break with him: the moment he tried to get money out of me by threatening to tattle about my visits to my brother—such as our visit now—about which there's no mystery, though for certain reasons I prefer them not talked about, it was all over between us. His vice I can abide and even his thieving, but blackmail never. I have done with him for ever. And he knows it. He can go to Hell; yes to Hell. But will he? Tell me, will he? I see him again as a child, the gentlest child I ever knew: that child's soul can never go to Hell. Perhaps it has flown to Heaven already——”

“No, it is somewhere in him still. It is still one of his souls.”

“I think so too. I remember him also one day at Biarritz years ago, when the first soul was still near the top: I see him striding into a rough sea when no one else dared and at the almost certain risk of his life, saving a boy who was drowning. Your king praised him——”

My king? I cowered. Words are symbols of horror. For a second I almost glimpsed the meaning beyond. “My king?”

“Yes, he was staying in the same hotel, and congratulated him. Not the present one; the old one, Edward VII.”

Edward the Seventh. That was all. They had crowned him, long ago, and there had been a holiday, and enamel mugs adorned with him and his wife distributed in Sunday School; and years afterwards had buried him, and there had been another holiday, with sunshine on Clee Hill, and mourning in Ludlow Church. Edward the Peacemaker.

Julian was still talking. “. . . So you see I hate this Seb, but not the other. Then too—— After all, I would rather avoid an open breach. We'll merely slip away, and I'll leave him a letter. Yes, a letter; it's more . . . isn't it? Look, he's sure to come into your room at the Polonia to-morrow morning. You will tell him I propose staying in Warsaw another four or five days. Say it artlessly—you can do it, you've got the face—so as to keep him completely off the scent, and then go about with him all day. Then at the last

moment—I'm fixing it up with Emile for five o'clock—you'll lock yourself in your room, pack your bag, and either you'll come round quickly to the flat, or I will bring the car round to a side street near the hotel."

My duty for the day was thus mapped out : a short day, as it was breakfast-time when I got back to the Polonia.

I decided to have a hot bath before getting into bed for an hour or two. The maid spoke no language I knew, but in the end I managed, or thought I had managed, to explain my desire, and flattered myself, when she held up five fingers three times in succession, that my bath would be ready in a quarter of an hour. A few minutes later, when the maid's three times five were nearly up, I went to the bathroom door. At the same moment Seb emerged from his room.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Only waiting for a bath. I ordered it a quarter of an hour ago, but it doesn't seem to be quite ready yet."

"Perhaps you didn't make yourself clear. I'll hurry the girl up for you."

He opened the bathroom door, said something to the maid in Polish, and as she came out slipped quickly in and slammed the door in my face. Through the door I heard peals of maniac's laughter.

"He! he! I've got the little Englishman's bath! I've got the little Englishman's bath!"

So there I was, with my sponge and soap and towel, looking rather foolish; not for the first or last time in my life either.

I returned to my bedroom and after a sponge-down got into my bed and went to sleep.

I was awakened by Seb, excited and haggard. Somehow he had got wind of our departure. He made no reference to the friendly little bathroom episode, but went straight to the point.

"Julian tells me he is going away this evening instead of in three or four days. That's so, isn't it?"

"This evening? That's the first I've heard of it. I thought we had three or four more days yet, I wanted to see Warsaw properly, I——"

I was a better liar than he, and he almost believed me. But for the rest of the day he stuck to me, clung to me, adhered.

Every half hour he rang up Julian's flat, and each time as he got the reply that Julian was not there became a more horrible, desperate sight.

After lunch I went to my room to rest again. He kept coming in and out, questioning, vaguely threatening Julian, crying, lying down on the floor and kicking with rage, whimpering, sobbing bitterly, till finally, sleepy and heartless, I locked the door against him.

The valet entered—Sebastyan slinking in behind him—to tell me, "You are wanted at the telephone sir" Seb, of course, followed me down to listen. As far as I could I answered Julian in monosyllables. My orders were to escape as soon as I could; to sneak round, with my bag packed, to the flat.

"It is to tell me we are going to the theatre to-night," I explained to Seb, "I really must go and get a bit of sleep."

Somehow I got three minutes alone to pack my bag. Somehow I gave him the slip in corridor and staircase, and slunk unobserved through the hotel doors and then the streets to Julian's apartment.

When I got out of the lift that took me up to the latter, Sebastyan was standing at the door!

We entered together.

Julian was furious, and frightened. Seb went down on his knees, pleaded piteously, crawled, kissed Julian's hand. "We will talk later," said Julian weakly, as always postponing the evil day. "I want to speak to Emmanuel alone for a minute or two. Go into the next room."

"You're a fool" he said, turning to me. "Still, I suppose you couldn't help it. How are we to get rid of him? Talk, talk about anything, while we find a plan. Oh, before I forget, you remember our arrangement at Oxford? I want to pay you now what I owe you: the pocket-money trifle which is all you said you would take. A hundred and fifty roubles: it's absurd!"

"It's too much; I have taught you hardly any English at all," I protested, with the immemorial insincere grimace of hopeful refusal. "And," I added, quite sincerely, "we are

only going on a short trip, aren't we, and shall be back at Praz in a few days ? ”

“ I know, I know. But anything might happen between now and then ; I would rather pay you now.”

“ What do you mean ; anything happen ? ”

He said nothing, but began counting out rouble notes.

“ What do you mean ? ” I repeated, raising my voice hysterically, in the fashion taught me by my companions of these latter days.

Sebastyan burst into the room, face wild, eyes bloodshot : “ What does he mean ? I'll tell you ! Fine morality yours, darling cousin, decoying Emmanuel to Poland to take him where you're taking him now. I am the bad one, am I, as you've told him a thousand times, and you're the good one ? Good, perhaps in the eyes of the one you're taking him now to see : your master, the Devil ! ”

He snatched at the money on the table—my money.

“ Listen,” he cried, turning now to me. “ This money in my hand is all there is between me and starvation, but I will give it you back, and ten times more that I will somehow and somewhere raise, to save you. I will give it you now, if you will promise to leave this room at once and Poland to-night. Come ! ”

I sat motionless ; my limbs would no move ; I was bewitched.

“ Fool, you are thinking of the books and clothes you have left at Praz ? What do they matter ? You would rather keep your soul ? Run—now—with that bag, to the Vienna station across the square ; take the night express for Berlin. In thirty hours you will be in England. If you stay in Poland, in thirty hours you will be—where ? Choose between good, noble, friendly Julian, and vicious, thieving, degenerate me. Choose between death and life ! Oh, choose, choose ! ”

I sat miserably and said nothing. I do not know what I thought ; there was nothing to say, nothing to think. Now, after a space of peaceful years, when Satan assails no longer, I look back and cannot despise myself overmuch. Weakness is no relevant word, for physically, morally, hypnotically, I *could not* move.

“ Choose, choose ! ”

With Julian I had to stay • it was destiny, and with destiny there is no choosing or chaffering to be done. There was no escape, nor ever is, nor can be: from God, or from His Enemy, whichever is our fate; nor from Eternity; nor, throughout Eternity, from ourselves.

I have a vision of Julian suddenly alive, who seized Seb by the scruff of the neck, wheeled him into the next room, kicking, threatening, screaming.

So went Sebastyan Lelewel out of my life. I have never seen him since, though years later I heard it said that he was killed in the wars. God will have mercy on his soul.

Julian locked the door on him, hustled me out into the hall, through the front door of the flat, and down the stairs. In the street, the car with Emile was waiting.

CHAPTER XVII : FEAR CASTLE

Christmas Eve, 1923.

Various circumstances, the chief one a spell of specially heavy work at the job that earns me my daily bread, have prevented me during three or four months from finishing this record.

Fearing I should never get my tale told and casting about for cheering arguments, I have found most comfort in this : the enforced abstinence from authorship is a blessing in disguise ; you will get back to your story the better for a holiday from it ; will approach it in a new mood which may well fit the portion still remaining to be written ; the temporal gap between your narration of Praz and of the End will correspond to the abyss, in 1913 reality, between the two episodes, and in ways obvious, and magical too, will help you to give the latter the sufficiently different atmosphere it needs.

For if the Quince period of that year differed from all that had ever befallen me previously, and if there was a new jump, as I entered the gates of Lelewel's chateau, to a world on a new plane of oddness, yet the difference between Praz and what led thereto is little as compared to the stride from Praz to what followed thereafter : what now follows here.

In the car Lelewel spoke no word to me, nor I to him. The countryside through which we were scorching had a mirage face. I widened my eyes to make sure, and could see it was unreal, as was the ' I ' who fancied he beheld it. We were racing not through ' Poland ' but through the Void. Late that night we reached the town of Lowicz.

Next morning we were away betimes, passing soon through Zgierz. Of this town I recall nothing save an other-age market place, whose cobbles jolted the car, and an emptiness that chilled my spirit, despite the morning sun. It had the appearance of a large country town, and the time was ten

o'clock ; yet the vast market place was bare and deserted, and in the whole town we saw only four or five human beings, skulking fearfully down byways and alleys, as though survivors in a town stricken overnight by death ; a city solitary, that was full of people. No doubt there was some excellent explanation : a fair or feast in the neighbourhood to which the whole population had flocked. But my spirit neither sought nor found it.

Another hour of the high road brought us to the outskirts of Lodz, the chief industrial place of Poland and the ugliest town that ever I saw. I had lived in our English Black Country, perceived through their palls of soot and smoke Greenock and Leeds and Rotherham and Oldham, but here only, I thought, amid these half-built filthy streets ending in violate fields, in this malodorous agglomeration (not town) of five hundred thousand slaves and Jews, this toadstool sprung up in one noisome generation on the plains, had I seen in its perfection our industrial society's ripest fruit : fruit of ashes and filth and hunger : the abomination of desolation.

We had a meal at a dingy hotel. Afterwards, on coming out into the unpaved street, we found the car surrounded by a crowd, for the most part lank gaping Jews and ragged little children, nearly all of them likewise of the ancient race.

Emile had some trouble in starting the car, and I had to sit through many minutes' staring from a hundred pairs of eyes. Bright crafty servile indomitable eyes. They were a glittering magnetic ring ; each pair of eyes moved nearer together, each pair nearer to the next pair, and all of them, in ever narrowing circle, nearer to me. I was their prey ; sat mesmerized ; crying for nothingness, for emptiness as at Zgierz, emptiness—the word closed my eyes and saved me from those others'. By incantation—"Lodz is worse than Leeds ; Lodz is worse than Leeds ; Lodz, Leeds ; Lodz, Leeds,"—I kept them closed till the engine started, the car moved off and I had escaped from the ring. Then after seventy seven 'Lodz-Leeds'es for margin of safety, I trusted myself again with sight.

We were driving through squalid suburbs, then slattern fields, and soon the countryside. I saw that we were no longer on the high road.

"Where are we ?" I asked.

Julian said nothing.

I peered at a signpost. "Don't look" he ordered, with unfamiliar sharpness.

But I had seen the first three letters of the word, and taking out a road-map I had of purpose bought in Warsaw, began searching for a place near Lodz that should begin with *Cze*.

"Put it away" cried Lelewel in a voice of brusquest command, not his own.

I folded the map up—after all it was not Julian I was obeying—instantly chid myself, calling Emmanuel a thousand fools for his cowardice, and then, to show myself I was brave, slowly unfolded and folded again the map.

The gesture heartened me. Defiance was my only plan and only hope. At the outset of the battle now beginning I must be as bold as the Other.

"I suppose they have told you all about him" Julian was saying, half to himself. "Plenty of busybodies at Praz to do that. All about his father and mine, his Jewish mother, his wanderings across the world, and the silly tales of his commerce with Evil?"

"No," I said. Then after a while: "Yes."

The road was getting bad, and almost too narrow for the car. For an hour we had passed no village and for some time not even an isolated house.

Was the world dispeopled; were only we three alive?

At last a tumbledown farm came into view. We drew up "Here," said Julian "we get out. The car can't go any further."

A ramshackle horse-drawn carriage was waiting in the road, and a coachman in peasant dress, who touched his hat to Julian and squinted curiously at me. Julian and I alone climbed into the changed conveyance.

"Isn't Emile coming?" (Sane Emile, if brutal).

"No, we shall be back here again in a few hours; it isn't worth while his coming on. He'll stay and mind the car."

A few yards beyond the farm, a gate barred the road, and here a high wall of trees stretched in both directions, as enclosing some domain.

Within the wall of trees, the scenery changed. We were in

open country no longer, but in a kind of deserted park. The road was hardly more than a track.

We reached a second wall of trees, unbroken save by our road and by a woodman's hut, from which emerged a cross-grained peasant to open for us, and lock again behind us, a second gate, this time not of wood but of iron.

Soon amid the autumn silence there came into view ahead of us a hill crowned by a ruined castle. Up to this hill and this castle our track appeared to lead.

As we drew nearer I saw that the castle was no more than a large tumbledown mansion. A high brick tower at one side was alone castellar; the rest of the building was roofless and windowless, a dreary ruin like that abandoned farm, the last in Miterdale, behind the Wasdale Screes. On the left of the ruin, a little nearer and lower, there was a row of farm buildings and sheds; on the right a long bleak one-storey building in grey stone with a score of identical windows, as a block of almshouses might be. The ruin, the farm buildings and the grey block thus formed three sides of a square. We were approaching from the fourth and open side. In the middle of the courtyard, as we ascended it, a shape I had thought to be a tree turned into a huge human figure: a giant. . . . Oh Calvary!

Pray, poor soul! Be bold! Keep courage in your eyes.

Though my heart was beating fast, my mind, working apart, assessed him at well over seven foot high, taller than Youll by a good six inches—Youll, the Magdalen giant—and broader in proportion. A black suit, brown gaiters, and a wide black Bismarck hat. A pack of hounds swarmed round him.

Amid the baying animals he came forward to greet us. The jowl, the side-whiskers, the sable eyes; recognition set me trembling anew; from the world in which I had known him a cold waft blew into my heart. "Fight fear, or He will crush you; fight *now*, at the start," whispered good spirits in my ear, and gave me courage, as we alighted, to steel myself, and as we shook hands to stare.

He was the Enemy.

His eyes, that shammed kindliness, were stronger than mine. Battle was joined, and his hosts were the mightier. But I had dared for an instant to look, and he knew that I was

to be had by battle only ; and by battle with God—" Who is with you " said the spirits.

What to do, though ? Where to look ?—I edged away from the bloodhounds. In the midst of the pack, one of their heads, much higher than the others, cased in a silly red bonnet, caught my eye. The head turned. It was a face ; a human, inhuman face.

Here, not Zwan, was the dwarf foretold. Terror dragged my soul beyond the present to the near future this thing, like all things now, foretokened, and I had near fainted when an angel said John-three-sixteen in my ear : " For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Not perish. Not perish.

The giant—" My brother, Count Bethlehem Zwelewely " I believe Julian had been muttering—whispered, called " Ganska " and the creature slipped through the pack and approached us, smirked and bowed. He was much smaller than Zwan, tinier even than the Knaresborough dwarfs, dressed in a little fur smock ; from under the red bonnet trimmed with white fox, peered the wizened ageless face. No pity there.

I saw that the long one-storey building on the right, though still looking like a row of houses, was in reality one single house and had one door only, at the top end. Through this door the Count Bethlehem invited us to pass, he and the pigmy following.

We found ourselves in a kind of dingy kitchen. Round a deal table we sat down to a cup of tea with lemon, and rusks and butter. At least they ate food. The trouble was where to look ; how, while making a brave show, to avoid all three pairs of eyes ; all three, for Julian's, through which not Julian stared, were, if more furtive, not less hell-infected than the others'. I looked this way and that, and strove to assess whether my love for God (before I had had need of Him) was sufficient to save me now, and repeated to my heart " Not perish. Not perish."

" Come and see the house," said Bethlehem to Julian. " It's the same as always, of course ; but then it's part of the rites of your all too infrequent visits to go over it each time."

He spoke in French, for my benefit ; guttural stuff, much less correct than the Praz Poles' French, hardly better than my own had by now become. He said each word separately and each with emphasis. This stressing of every word, which in a gushing talker—who could not, however, have said the words as emphatically, because not as discretely—would have had a ludicrous effect, was evidently part of the bastard's personality, and of his power, and plan. Each new word, as he *created* it, was a symbol of its real, its magical meaning ; gave a near glimpse of the terror behind it.

We passed from the kitchen into a musty apartment, furnished in out-of-date salon fashion, with a loo table in the middle and round the walls a once handsome, but moth eaten, drawing-room suite, upholstered in faded *rose du Barry* silk ; the room and all in it was thick with antique dust and the air mouldy. We passed through into the next apartment ; I have a notion that the colour scheme was blue, once blue. Otherwise, in fustiness, in the sense of dreariness and death, the room was identical. On into another like room, and another, and another. All part of his scheme to reduce us by fear. ' Us,' I reflected : what would he do with Julian ? On into another, and another.

These nightmare rooms that opened eternally, each into the next ; let us get through with them fast, fast, have done with them !—and my spirit, outrunning my body, got many rooms ahead, and long before we had walked through to the last one, I had *woken up*, and was laughing at his efforts to terrify as he piloted us through four or five more, and back, slowly, through the whole score of them to the kitchen. There must have been a smile on my physical face, too, for as my spirit danced round him, he lost confidence, by moments paled, felt not so sure. The which seeing, I took courage, and knew that the chances of the fight were better, and thanked God inwardly.

When we got back from the dream rooms to the more human kitchen, I soon fell asleep again, returning to the world.

Furtive Julian tried to face me and said, though really the other was speaking : " I have private affairs to talk over with my brother ; perhaps you'd excuse us for an hour or so ? "

I took the hint, and not knowing quite what to do, moved towards the door. The Count chimed in : " You are from

Oxford, aren't you ? A great place for river sports, I have heard. You like boating ? I have an old boat, and the river's only a few minutes distant ; if you'd like an hour's rowing, one of my men will show you the way."

I could only obey. A surly-eyed old peasant, the only son of man (?) besides dwarf and giant I had seen, accompanied me along a path strewn with fallen bricks and stones up under the wall of the castle, then down a hill that descended steeply beyond, to a sluggish-looking stream. He unmoored a weather-beaten old tub, grimaced and departed.

I pulled out from the shore, and rowed away in what direction, at what rate, under what impulse I do not know.

The trouble of my case was my utter helplessness. I knew not how nor when the attack on my soul would be delivered. I could do nothing but wait, wait fearfully, for evil's appointed moment. I prayed hard, but only that God might help me not to pray. For as months (old centuries) ago Miss Calmady and I had agreed, I must not cadge for succour, call on Jehovah because my need was desperate and the weather foul ; in my fight with His Enemy, I must stand or fall on my record as a fair-weather friend of God's.

I awoke to perception of Nature round me ; there were thick high woods on either bank, so high that though it was still early evening there was little light. Between these dark woods my boat moved on. Then, after a great while, the air grew brighter, and on the left, the west, of a sudden the forest broke, and I beheld a crimson riotous sky, a tumult of rose and flame that lit up the eternal plains, and in the middle heart of the low horizon, where in the most scarlet place the sun lay dying, there were chariots.

There was silence, and but for the gnats that had teased it, no evidence of life. No, even the gnats were gone. Was there life ? Or death only ? In a chariot I saw one rise, brandish a great spear and call me. " Lee ! Lee ! " the far-away sunset voice was calling. It was not illusion, and I wondered. (Not illusion !—what test have you, my heart ; has any one, has God, of what is real and what unreal ?) In the red sky the black spear beckoned again, the voice called. Was I alive, and this the voice of Death ; or dead, and this the voice of Life ?

A thud. The boat banged into the shore and restored me :

restored me to what ? To the plane of consciousness to which belonged also that boat, and the stream and the trees, and Lelewel and the castle ; and the fears and memories and limbs—I touched my knees and face—that made up Emmanuel Lee.

“ Shout that name yourself ! ” whispered one in my ear. “ No, no ! ” warned instantly Another ; and the second was an angel of heaven, for if at that moment, on the borderland, I had used my human voice, called my own name aloud, I believe that Madness would there have seized me (as at Zwan’s kissing-time) and borne me forever through Hell.

Instead I turned the boat, and in the twilight, fast changing from dove’s to raven’s, rowed hard, and repeated all the counties of England and States of the Union and Redskin tribes of Catlin and stations on the L.N.W. main line, and the kings of France and their wives and of England, and the first words of each of the Psalms, and read from a book in my heart the Sermon on the Mount.

I must have come much further than I had thought ; since it took me about an hour to get back to the landing-place, where, looming, towering in the dark, for night had fallen, stood Count Bethlehem.

“ Come, let me help you out ! ” silkily—I shrank from his hands—“ I’m afraid I have bad news for you. A few minutes after you had set off in the boat, we did not know in what direction, a messenger came over posthaste from the nearest town with a telegram for Julian from Praz telling him that his grandmother—and mine too, though I have never seen her, and have abjured kinship with her in the other world as she with me in this—was dying.”

“ She’s always dying ” I got out, essaying a pleasantry, which he ignored.

“ Julian called for the carriage. ‘ I must leave at once,’ he cried. ‘ Lee, where’s Lee ? Find him, shout for him.’ I sent men through the forests on the river’s bank, gave them your name to shout ; but when, after an hour and more, you were not to be found, my brother—most reluctantly, though he was weeping for his grandmother—had to decide to get back to his car and return to Praz without you. The carriage that took him down is already back ; by now he’s fifty versts away. I

am most genuinely sorry, but if you will accept for one night, or at the worst it may be two, the humble and eccentric hospitality which is all I can offer you, I shall be honoured. No Englishman, except a young priest once, for one night, one night only, many years ago, has ever slept beneath my roof. A bedchamber that is, I fear, all too primitive has been prepared ; I beg you to accept it. What else can you do ? It is too late to drive you to the nearest railway station, over twenty-five versts away, and in any case there is no train until to-morrow . . .”

Trapped.

Whether the story was a lie, or if true, whether Bethlehem had faked the wire, or whether Lelewel had deliberately left me to my fate : incidentals such as these I did not waste spirit or strength in thinking on. I was alone with my enemy.

With the inward phrase ‘ Fight fear : Fight fear ’ incessantly repeated I kept myself alive and afoot, and walked by his side with a step I thought bold, though not pitifully overbold, up from the river to his habitation. He towered above me, any moment could have lifted his arm, struck me down, to death trampled me. Fighting fear, I reflected he would not do this : not until his attempt to endevil me had failed. As, no doubt, it had failed with others, whose following fate I could guess. The young priest, for instance : ‘ One night, one night only.’

He knew what I was thinking, and knew that I knew that he knew. In hell as in heaven there is a wordless communication of thought.

He was wearing the mask of a normal human being until, worn down by fear, abetted by magic, I was ready to receive his Master.

In this-world forces, brain and cunning, we were evenly matched perhaps, and cowardice was a legion in both armies. But Which was the mightier, and Which had the loyaller servant : his Lord or mine ?

We had supper in the kitchen alone. Ganska was not to be seen. What other humans or devils there may have been near were silent and unseen. I talked feverishly, of Lelewel, Praz, Paris, Oxford, England, history, books ; he questioning me

courteously, but always with silences between his words. Silence, he saw, was what unnerved me most.

We ate. I had no fear of mundane melodrama, of poison or sleeping draught in my food. Though drugs to keep me over-wideawake there may have been.

I never dared meet his eyes : which, bold therefore, sought mine. They were the master pair : that, poor wretch, I knew. But for all the power with which he was slowly crushing me, for all his black arts, for all the might of Lucifer behind him, I knew in my heart that he was not totally sure of himself nor of ultimate victory. I was not his first attempted victim ; and if the others, after he had failed to transfer his burden to them, had been cruelly banished from the world (say : tortured, murdered), their death had at least been swallowed up in victory, and their souls had gone to Heaven. He was not sure.

" Except for this kitchen," he was saying, " the living-rooms I use are not in this building, but in the farm buildings across the courtyard : my bedroom, my study, the servants' quarters and the room I have tried to make decent enough for you. Come and see them."

We traversed the dark courtyard, and entered the farmhouse building opposite.

CHAPTER XVIII: THE TERROR BY NIGHT

Twenty steps downward through void and darkness. Then a long stone passage, sixty paces whereof I had counted when he stopped—I supposed at a door, as I heard the jingle of keys.

“Twenty for steps, sixty for passage,” I whispered to myself, and caught for a fleeting second the mystical meaning behind the proportion, and when it faded, and its joy, had still within me to out-shout old Fear the lesser joy (and inward protection) of Pride in Statistical Coincidence.

Who is not happier when, in Catalan gambling-hell, up turns processionally two, three, four times a number identical? Though his pesetas be in the red thirties, at each fresh sounding ‘Ocho Negro!’ he rejoiceth, proud of the one in stars-in-their-thousands chance that is emptying his pockets to swell those pieces of Eight.

Not happier when, infant on Yorkshire sward, though proud of his average and run-gluttonous, yet fifth man in he gets a duck that rounds off faultlessly the four men in before him’s series of four—three—two—one?

And who—when the figures fail him—is not despairing? Despairing as shall be I when, there amid the fire everlasting my hateful soul may win, repeating to stay my agony my number magical, I look across for sign of deliverance to see if it be not also the number and mark of the Beast. But her number is six hundred three score and six (for it is the number of a man), and not even the will-power of final despair, the flames around me, shall avail to shift that six six six to seven seven seven . . .

“Twenty for steps, sixty for passage. That’s three times, three times exactly,” said Emmanuel.

“Three times *what*, mad-brain?” retorted Lee.

Then found I was counting again, counting the seconds

until he should have found the key, and have turned it in the lock, and have led me forward—into what?

By the time I heard a key turn and a bolt pulled back and a door creak open, I had reached forty five, and at once insane memory began torturing the new figure.

Forty five! Bonnie Prince Charlie. A century behind him Roundheads and Royalists charging on Naseby Field. A century behind them gathering princely faces at Worms, crowding priestly faces at Trent. What a lot I know!—and ought to know—Woman of Forty Five Ought to Know—and, in the geography books of my school days, the number of those great United States, and the interest earned by my best-to-do uncle on the rubber shares that made his pile, and the percentage of females in mining counties, percentage of children among the people in Heaven. . . .

‘The secret Magick of numbers’ that thus now possessed me I know for a signal of danger. My heart beat faster when I saw who had hoisted it—when Bethlehem, having flung open the door and lit a taper, took the counting from his lips to mine, whispering: “Forty six, forty seven, forty eight . . .”

Then, with a *Pardon!*, courteous or mocking, for entering first, he led the way into a great vaulted cellar.

Its ghostly parts and contents came upon me as the gathering shapes of a dream.

It was an enchanter’s den as old pictures portray them. Stuffed beasts sprawling on the floor and nailed to the walls; books, tubes and phials; stoles, cymars, birettas, skulls; painted stars and moons on the ceiling; great crystal globe in one corner, kabbalistic banner in another.

These things I saw, or believe that I saw; though I had no touchstone to tell me whether hallucination they were, whether any more hallucination than all other things that for thirty years I have seen in this world I think I see.

Nor, positing it to be real, can I know how far this setting was mere flummery designed to beget fear in others, how far the ambience which Bethlehem, as a bondsman of evil, found inservient to iniquity, and hence appropriate for himself. ‘Mumbo-jumbo, flim-flam!’ I jingled; but I only half believed myself, and believing, found my heart no less en-

meshed in web of Fear. Not always in vain is the net spread in the sight of the bird.

The sneers of sane remote selves within me were voices on the circle of the earth.

It is not happening.—That's what you cry to yourself in a dream.—It is a dream.—Wake up then!—I am awake; listen, he's talking.—Yes, but talking in a dream.—Whose dream: his dream, my dream, God's dream?—The Devil's.—The Devil's dream; why that's the universe.—The universe: why that's the Devil's dream.—The Devil's. . . .

Faster and faster, brain and body, I seemed to be being whirled round, a praying-wheel turned by the finger of Evil. Faster and faster, until he had near whirled me into believing that the last lie to which he had whirled me was true, into *making it true*.

"Oh help me!" from the innermost heart I cried, and prayer to the good God unwound me swiftly, muttering me back through each sentence to the initial lie.

"It is happening" I said—and saw—as I became stationary in this world, and painted dungeon shifted again into place.

But seeing again that this was real, I feared not less.

(You who may read this record, and are mocking as you read, or at least despising my cravenness, wait until some moment when Fear has closed in round your heart, then say aloud, aloud and alone, in some void and salvationless place, the string of sentences above. Say them seeing the meaning behind them, giving yourself up to Whoever their author may be.)

"Sit down!" he said, and I obeyed.

I watched him without looking up as he settled himself down at the skulled writing-desk.

"I have an hour or two's study to do" he went on, in a human voice that though twelve feet away dinned in my ear. "So perhaps you'll excuse me. Make yourself comfortable—take rather that chair—and read awhile. I don't expect you read Russian or Polish: but German?"

"No."

"Then Latin?"

"With difficulty."

"French of course?"

“ Yes.”

“ My library is at your disposal,” and he waved his arm round the shelves. How, if his arm were human—and he four yards away—was it that it seemed to loom into my face? Once I reached out to touch it, to catch that swerving sleeve and rub the cloth of it sagely between thumb and finger (as I saw our Queen once do with corporal-girl’s tunic, when reviewing Female Army, and mutter “ Serviceable, serviceable ”) and mutter “ Real, real ”: though what poor proof it would have been, and if proof, what poorer comfort. And if sleeve had been nothingness, what terror too.

“ The French books are mainly in that corner.”

Great tomes like Family Bibles; yellow-backs; musty leather volumes; square squat ones in black vellum bindings with kabbalistic signs in gold for title. I looked at them and away from them stupidly, fearing them, yet knowing—who had no strength to stand forth and attack the danger closing around me, animal sense only to ward it off, somehow fend, postpone—that to stand there doing nothing, my brain unbusied, a vessel for terror to fill, was the most perilous course of all.

I watched myself (in alternate seconds as short as Eternity passing from dream to waking life and waking life to dream, though knowing not which was which: seconds so short that the two states owned me together, and the difference between them was felt in space, not time) take down an atlas, volume harmless surely, and sit down in the arm chair he had indicated.

Watching him furtively, always looking away almost before I looked, I saw him take up a quill and begin to write. The cruelty on his lips. My heart rose against him. Cruelty is the crown of selfishness; selfishness is the one sin; sin is the Devil.

On a sudden the cruelty was fled, forgotten, the lips were beautiful, and the face as a friend of the Redeemer’s. Then, as a swift cloud across the sun, evil had returned; then fled again. The face was possessed of the Devil and of Christ in turns so swiftly alternating that they merged together, that he was possessed of Them Both at the selfsame time: like me perhaps, like you.

That dual presence I must have apprehended in a moment

of deeper trance. Back to more normal plane, I could see who, on *his* normal plane, was the dominant One within him. The Devil was his chief, God but a sleeping partner.

The scratchings of his quill were spells to bind me. Intermittently at first, then almost unbrokenly, a current of evil power (as it were electric, that compassed me round) came from the paper towards where I was, a wave-weapon in the unseen air I had no arm to combat.

I opened the 'atlas,' then closed it with a cry. No map had I seen, but a woodcut depicting a scene of such blasphemy and sin that now if I begin even to let myself think thereon, the horror returns again and the limbs and the faces will be moving as they moved on that page. I heard the echo of my cry : his laugh that ended an infinite fraction beyond it.

When I found courage again to look, his face, bent low over the paper, did not seem to be moving or to have moved. I flung Beelzebub's *Multum in Parvo* Mappery on the floor with provocative thud to force him into speech or anger, to hasten the end, for let it come quickly, quickly ; like a fool, like a phantom, kicked the foul thing.

He paid no heed, did not look up, went on scratching with the quill.

Don't fret, it'll come quickly enough. ' One night ' that English priestling spent beneath his roof.

Fight Fear, fight Fear !—and I swanked over to the book-case, as to make casual choice for most casual evening's reading.

Now while I was gazing upon them certain books stared out from the shelves, became magnets, their backs glistened and would pull my hand towards them ; and though I kept my arms tight by my side and clenched my fists, each second the pull was stronger. I was praying : prayer that proved efficacious, since I had not meant to pray, had not known I was praying. At once the pull weakened. Soon I felt I was free to reach for books other than the ones he had destined for me, and like ' a typical Englishman ' could cast a look of bored indifference over the shelves.

" Free, you think ? " sneered Doubt, Who spares no race, smites even England, " What if the volumes you now will pick out—of your own free will : ha ! ha !—are the very ones he

all along meant you to choose ; and the pull towards the others the trick, the illusion ? ”

So I fell into his second and artfuller trap—Doubt is a Devil’s man—and oh-so-pleased with myself ‘ of my own free will ’ (ha ! ha !) picked out the books that just now had glistened.

He was watching, though his eyes were never lifted up. I drew them forth as indifferently as I could, and took them over, seven or eight of them perhaps, to my chair.

Steeling myself against new horrible surprise, I opened the first that came. No nightmare woodcuts here : mere pages of old-fashioned French print. A first glance at the others revealed no horrors either ; most of them seemed to be old treatises on alchemy and sorcery. Superstitions of the Middle Ages. Still, subjects periculouſ, so I resolved to do this : look at the pages without reading them.

Even so, it might be they would destroy me ; they were grimoires, wizard’s chapbooks, and the dreamy state of staring at rather than reading them might be the very condition both they and he sought. Either way, any way, there was danger ; reading them or not reading them ; staying here with my enemy or asking to be conducted to my bedchamber. Fear of the coming night I was to spend there equalled Fear of staying where I was. Fear urged me on ; Fear held me back. Fear compassed me wholly round.

Of the four or five titles I remember, two I have chanced on since. The fact that these two at least were names of real books goes, I think, to prove what I then believed : that the physical phenomena around me in that room were real—always I mean as much as anything is real—that the books were there, and the banners, and the beasts, and the crystal globe and Count Bethlehem, who, whatever Satan-possessed enchanter he might be besides, was also the human being whose planetary life Karol Morawski (Karol, I would kiss your knees, your boots, to have you here) had recounted to me on my first night at Praz ; who was joined by a series of unbroken phenomena (Julian’s visit, etc.) with ‘ real ’ things and people.

The two books were ‘ *De la Demonomanie des Sorciers* ’ by J. Bodin, an old treatise familiar I believe to students of the

black arts, which I recognised with a start when rummaging in the Geneva library a few months back, and Huysmans' 'Là-Bas,' the only modern work among them, and the only one which that night he forced me truly to read ; a book known of course to the general public (though I had not then heard of it) and variously judged as a serious study, if by a litterateur rather than expert, of mediæval black magic, as an over-bookish caricature of the subjects treated, as a mere tongue-in-the-cheek hoax. Between these judgments I cannot choose : for though I have seen the volume in bookshops since, and though I went so far in a foolish moment when planning the present record as to buy it, and in a foolisher to open it and glance at the letterpress, except that once, during that Polish night of terror, I have *read* no single line.

At most of the other books I merely glanced ; they but tinted and limned in the picture evoked by 'Là-Bas,' over which picture, as Satan brushed it in, lay his shadow half behind, looming up and towards me, projected spectrally ; which picture, as I turned over the feverish pages, Huysmans and I and the sorcerer together were creating. The 'I' of the novel, Gilles de Rais the evil Marshal, the magi of the other glanced-at works, Twardowski of Karol's tale, Bethlehem my physical neighbour : all became one in a fused person of near terror in my heart.

I saw him emerge, a tall and glorious boy, above the horizon of the Middle Ages, with castled plains around him and pinnacled towers hard by. (At first, before the spell got hold, the vision I had was nourished more from the book than from the memories in Bethlehem's heart ; and the early days of the being who now peopled me were vague and bookish and glamorous ; not at all the cruel changing-time from love to hate that Bethlehem's own real childhood had been.) A boy who liked not overmuch this world and sought the other, longing to be the chief soul of his day which, in a body inhabiting earth, should be inhabited by God. But already in his time and country, one such soul was God's chosen : Joan, blessed among women ; and through the doorway of Envy Satan got his first foot in. In all moments when his soul was openest to God, Gilles had mystic affection for the Maid, and communed with her, above the swart sky of the English battles,

in the upper world where the stars and the sun shine together and with our Saviour reigns the Devil, His enemy and till now His equal ; loved her.

But Envy now urged him—balked of his wish, too-worldly wish (Ambition), to be the chief other-world soul of his day—to become the chief this-world one, to array himself more victoriously than all men in the glories of this planet : warrior's triumph, fame, riches, power. He won renown in battles, became Marshal ; rivalled Joan in the mouths of men.

Riches still lacked him, and Satan, now wearing his golden mask (Cupidity), beckoned him on. He turned to alchemy. In those days there were threescore laboratories in France, above a hundred in the Germanies, in Britain and the isles not a few. Then, as now, the physical principle the alchemists worked on was true. Then, as now, the chief motive spurring them on, gold's loveliness, was wrong ; and the Christians who dressed them in straw most flammable and burnt them at the stake, or in iron cages roasted them, were but evilly doing good, fighting with flame and fire one of man's illest hankerings, crisp fuel for godly glow, and weed that grows apace. So grew it in Gilles. Whatever of disinterested love of knowledge, of Paracelsian purity, his researches may first have had, soon vanished ; the love of lucre shone only in his eyes and muddled his heart. I watched the bodily change ; no longer a poplar, slim ephebe, he was a giant among men ; dark hair was covering his coarsening face ; the mouth was spoiling, the eyes' glitter hardening.

I dared not look across the room to compare, confirm.

God crowned his alchemy with failure. Soon came the Devil and promised him victory : on terms.

Joan died at the stake, burnt by English soldiery and viler French. There was now small doubt in God's Heart but that he could not come into Gilles, passing on from the Maid as into His new chief prophet on earth ; for he had wandered too far away. But the Almighty took pity, and faced Gilles squarely, and asked for possession of all his soul. Much of it, as I said, by now belonged to Satan, crept in through manifold doors, Who prompted this reply : ' Lord God, if I am to be utterly Thine, and do for Thee penances and pains impossible, what wilt Thou do for me ? The Devil rewards His servants ;

surely Thou also, Lord God, as when I—I—was a child we sang ? For I was child in England once, chapelled Albion of half-a-thousand years to come—Thou rememberest, Lord ; I will sing it Thee again :

“ Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee
Repaid a thousandfold will be :
Then gladly will we le-end to Thee ! ”

Then gladly, Lord, gladly ! But promise me Power : thousand-fold Power.”

God, sorrowing, moved away ; the which seeing, Spite and Rage and Hate, three of Satan’s ministers, seized Gilles and to the captive their Lord whispered : “ The Two of Us, old Ancient of Days and I, divide all power ; He, my Enemy, has refused you ; I will not.” Then Gilles—Faust—Twardowski—Bethlehem—his names were Legion (he was looming across the table to destroy me) made his Pact and, in exchange for his eternal soul, acquired inhuman power over matter and man.

Now he served his new Master, passing from greed to demoniac lust, from lust to cruelties without name. I sat in frozen terror as one by one I watched his iniquities accomplish themselves, and the sorceries which his iniquities bought him ; the tortures, the triumphs, the rapes ; the crimes, dear to Satan, without motive or cause ; the bewitchings of the living and the dead. And, Beelzebub’s chief joy : the blasphemies. I watched the Mass, the ceremony of the sacrifice of Jesus for our world, mockery Mass, and my breath failed me. The symbols were changed a little, for the outward vessels and objects I had read of upon the book were described as they are in the Romish Breaking of Bread, while it was as though between the walls of our Tawborough ‘ Room ’ that my physical eyes saw him, performing awful profanation of our Brethren Mass ; masticating Host made of flour and of powder that was all the remains of a little slain child, my brother, burned to white ritual ashes ; gulping from the tankard on our Lord’s Table wine that was blood, warm from the white throat of a little slain child, my sister, bled by him to death ; standing there foully naked, with face too evil to behold ; crying aloud with an awful cry : “ For Satan so loved the world——”

Choking, I sprang up to smite the horrible face. It eluded me, and now darkly luminous, a shining darkness, beckoned

me to a far corner. I followed hard, and as I sought the eyes to strike them they vanished, and the features and the blaspheming mouth, and where had been the dark face was a round radiance, a featureless sun, so extremely glorious that it ravished my sight.

And as I peered therein, after many million years black spectres flickered, moved across the globe, moved on, were followed by myriad others. The spectres were men, and their movements the rout of history. And as I stood there under his spell, with neither body around my soul nor room nor world round either, I beheld and suffered through every jot and tittle of the timeless War between the Two that has been fought or shall be. I stood there for Eternity.

I believe I saw, though (finite again) I cannot conceive of it, the Beginning.

I saw the angels of ancient Heaven thrusting and smiting in titanic warfare for the Universe, saw the Empyrean shake and totter as Messiah's legions triumphed, and drove all Satan's into the wasteful Deep, over the verge of heaven into the pit that is bottomless.

The legions vanished, God's above the margent of the globe before me, the Exparadised below.

After the ten thousand thunders of the foreworld's war, silence. After the multitudinous-moving rout of pre-Creation, grey emptiness : æons of emptiness without sound.

And as I listened, after many million years, I heard the voice of God saying, " Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness," and as I watched and saw, God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him.

And coëvally, uttering each syllable with Him, I heard the voice of Satan saying, " Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness," and I saw the hands of the Devil create man in His own image, in the image of Satan created He him.

And two new hordes of black things crowded the planet before me.

And the kindreds of God moved nearer, and the kindreds of Satan moved nearer, and joined in marriage, and made the human race : cross-breeds, with the blood of God and of Devil in their veins, the breath of Devil and God in their hearts ; and within each one of them, between each one of

them and his neighbour, between each family and people of them and all other tribes and kindreds, flamed up, raged anew, seethed ever, the pre-terrestrial war.

Sometimes good deeds were done ; and I saw love and sacrifice. Some forgave their enemies and prayed for those that despitefully used them. Men gave themselves for their women, women for their children. Peoples lived in amity together ; saints sought reunion with God, their nobler parent.

But everywhere the Enemy gained ground. In hearts ever more numberless He vanquished God within, love for all other hearts without. Pleasure for self, pain for the universe else, became ever more widely the rule of men. Wars, horrors, cruelties stalked naked abroad ; and obeying Him thus in their commerce with brother humans, also in their dealings with life beyond men sought not God, but their other Master. Here and there from the antheaps still arose a saint, a mystic, soon done to death by the idolmongers, warmongers, whore-mongers ; all the bedevilled, who, espying love, cried, ' It is treason to our Prince ! '

Each black figure that strove and slashed was fighting for his separate self only. In his heart Satan said : ' So only wilt thou earn my reward. Look, that other's speech and ways are different from thine : make war on him, despoil him, uproot him from the earth.' And because men differed in mere idiom and custom and clan, every horror wrought they against each other. I beheld all the wars that have been and are to be, the slaying soldiers of every time and land : savages naked rending each other with tooth and claw ; savages tunic'd and breastplated, with spear and sling and javelin, with other beasts to help them (horses and dogs and lions, and Carthaginian elephants, trampling the Mercenaries' faces to pulp, tusking the Roman bodies, trumpeting, triumphing) ; with arrow, boomerang, blow-pipe ; savages uniformed gloriously, plumes shivering in the fray, murdering with ball and musket and cannon ; savages in hordes ever huger, garmented drably, dealing death with missiles from the heavens above and from the sea below, and by poisons and foul vapours, and grey elephants of steel, tearing, trampling. Each boy's hand as he grew to manhood was lifted to deal suffering. ' The arm

was dark and naked and clawed his brother to death ; covered with skins and clubbed him down ; with a gold bracelet adorned and pointed languidly that a hundred other boys be crucified along the cypress-posted road that led from city to desert, crucified between the lions, beast and boy alternately, and picked voluptuous pebbles from the roadside and threw them into the eyesockets, voice laughing as the gnats buzzed out ; or sheathed in steel, or silk, or khaki, wielding lance or sword or bayonet, lifted always to pierce, to thrust, to disembowel ; to give suffering, to summon death.

After each slaughter I saw they made them graven images to the chief killers, and set them in high places ; greeted with gold the mightiest murderers, and with garlands and song. Through village streets, through a thousand cities, the proud procession moves ; between ancient temples and past flagrant shrines ; past cenotaphs, and skyscrapers, and kraals ; over the dead Forum, strewn with imperial yesterdays.

And faiths were different : I saw a thousand variant altars. From each the priests screamed : Destruction on all others ! Those who believed in the Devil this way slew those who believed in Him in that. Those who believed in the Lord did likewise, thus serving the Devil too.

And ' Look, ' said Satan, ' the colour of his skin is different, ' and I saw the white creatures, who were often mightier in ill-doing (since surer souls of His), lay hold on the black creatures and throw them to the crocodiles, with merry laughter cut the unborn children from the mother's womb, or suffer them to be born that in the rice mortars their dear mothers might pestle them to death, or chain them, ship them, sell them to other white-faces who then toiled and tortured them to death, or, if by wild chance they escaped, then hunt them through the Dismal Swamp with Tally-Ho ! and texts and bloodhounds, or flay them laughingly alive : always with thanksgiving to Christ ascending into Hell. (This colour-war, this skin game of Satan's, is one my witnessing whereof comes clearest over to my later conscious self ; with freight of awful memories swarms over when I read of the infamies that darkened the path of Spaniard and Portuguese in New Worlds west and east, made foul the psalm-singing mouths of Englishmen, chief men and mighty in the Trade, priests of the Middle

Passage ; or of those beacon fires of human fuel that still answer across the Great Republic : fires dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.)

And ' Look,' said Satan, ' he is circumcized. Come, play the foreskin game !'—and they lurched forward, Godstone and the Russian consul and the German, and a hundred other faces aflame with cruellest hate, and slashed through the cowering ghettos ; and at the foot of a cross they reviled and wagged their heads, mocking ' O King of Israel ' before dying God made man and Jew ; and in a Polish cradle the Grandmother struck a sweet infant face——

And the earth grew darker. And there were locusts and scorpions and thunders and lightnings and abominations of evil and filthinesses of fornication ; wrong, and for ever woe.

In a few hearts only did God still live ; of the thousands dead each minute gleaned, the spirits of now a handful only went back to Him. In but a trice Evil would have got all men, conquered all the world. It was almost done, and the Universe One, and Satan's——

In agony : " God ! " I cried.

The magic word of all the words of the world.

On the instant it checked the enchanter behind me, I heard him stop scratching with his quill. His spell was broken. The picture before me was transformed. The first woe was past.

Above the darkness, in the top of heaven appeared a star, brighter than Sirius, and ignited love anew in the hearts of three sorcerers, whom Satan had been binding to Him for His Own, whom now this star beckoned from a far country, reawaking in them the desire of the Lord ; brought them westward, going before them till it came and stood still over where was a stable, and in it a mother and her baby, God born Himself on to the earth.

In equal warfare from without Satan had routed Him almost, established dominion over near all created things. God saw that only by crossing into this world and risking HIS OWN SOUL in unequal war—even as a human against Satan, still a god—could He save the children of men. " Whosoever would lose his own life shall save it. It is true of My children. It is true of ME."

And the Devil's faithful scourged the Lord God made man, stripped Him, put a crown of thorns on His head, mocked Him, spat upon Him, crucified Him. (Christ was His earthly name ; now Zwan's, now Bethlehem's, His face, clothed as with the sun.) And suffering all the human agony of the race He had helped to create, He cried with a loud voice—I saw the lips' candour moving—and yielded up the ghost, and returned to uncarnified Godhead.

The voice was heard throughout the world. The picture lightened, the hates flagged, and though everywhere evil still was strong, I saw that new days were beginning.

I said that in dying I saw His mouth cry or speak. But, I suppose because sound travels more slowly than light, I saw with my eyes these good changes in the world beginning long centuries before with my ears I heard His words :

My Self, My Self, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?

and apprehended, in a wild moment of light and loosening, how then God by hazarding Eternity, by hazarding Himself, had saved the universe, saved every one, saved me ! And I ran forward to embrace Him on the Cross, which was but a foot away, mere everlastingness away ; to taste the face of God, kiss Him for ever——

I stumbled forward, knocked my face against the world, the silly crystal globe ; fell down.

A hand came forward, and as it helped me to my feet seemed also to be pulling me on to another plane of being : back to the this-world, or so-called so-seeming ' normal,' plane.

" You fell asleep in the chair, then got up in a nightmare and stumbled against the furniture. No hurt, I hope ? " The first real words he had spoken since, at the beginning of the night, he had offered me his books. Solicitously he brushed dust from my suit.

I was unsteady on my feet, body like soul finding it difficult to adjust itself to earth again. But the rate of gyration slowed gradually down ; with widening sweep and waning speed things went round me. I fixed my eyes on a stuffed green lizard attached to the wall ; three, five, ten, twenty I could count until next he appeared. And though the circular magic

of numbers made speed reduction slower, soon the room was still ; the room and I.

He was brushing my clothes, and as his arm passed before me, behind me, around me, and I felt that any second he might claw, might clutch, old Physical Fear—this-world, so-called so-seeming 'normal,' Fear—obtained me again ; by recalling the spiritual terror I had just escaped, I sought to scorn it ; by desperate endeavour I fought my trembling.

Spells had brought physical terror ; now clothes-brush and closeness had their corporal task. He was ringing the changes.

First, he needed and sought to impose on physical me physical fear of physical him. His face, his flummery, the spaces and silences between his words—as now between his brushings—all helped, and were meant to help, this end.

Second, I must be pushed beyond the last limit of mystical fear also. He knew that the soul given me at birth—and its voyagings in this world, not least during the past four months, four hours—had predisposed me for victimhood or, as he saw it, for victory. The night's magic was to this end ; but though he had brought me near the last limit, he had not yet accomplished his aim, into the Universe-terror pushed me utterly over.

I began to see, standing there, as visions and deductions rioted through my brain, that perhaps this strange summer's trek, from Edgbaston to Fear Castle, had diminished not increased my danger, strengthened not weakened my power of resistance.

At Birmingham and at Lichfield (twice) I had beaten off, when very near me, the Unnameable.

At Paris in the Carlton bedroom, and again at Praz on my first night, I had withstood Him when He had girded at me through half-witting Julian ; and withstood Him with less difficulty, fortified unconsciously by previous success.

That afternoon behind his screens, I had beaten Black Zwan.

In Grandmother's bedroom, when White Zwan had testified, I had fought, said No to instep-invitation, and kept sane.

Helping myself, I had been helped by God. Helped by God, I had been stronger next time to help myself.

Fear, then, of the Unnameable, fear of the planetary person through whom He would assail me. As preliminaries, as

conditions of success, these were essential. But they were preliminaries only : for Him to *win*, my own heart must be willing to welcome Evil as a friend.

Now began this chiefest and vilest work. (He had ceased to brush, and I was seated again.) Now he cast spells to make me fall amorous of the Devil, to call into full life within me the indigenous devil of my soul. A cruel war in which he used every weapon from most impalpably spiritual to most crassly physical now waged he against me.

Here also, as I see things now, the summer's happenings had had beneficent relevance, had built up my reserve of good, my strength to resist evil. If I have dwelt most, owing partly (oh, partly !) to modesty, partly to morbid preference, on my weaknesses, my peccadilloes and my sins, even in this 1913 I had also witnessed for God.

In the Staffordshire meadow when, beholding my own sinfulness, I had loathed it, spat at it and railed ; thus blaspheming against the Devil.

When Wraith Romany had cried to be saved, and the question came ' Will you save him ? ' I had said ' Yes ! '

At Praz in a score of incidents, earning a score of rebuffs, I had testified against hate.

All the hate and evil I had seen everywhere, in Paris, in Praz ; in Karol's eyes when he talked of his ' pro-Jew leanings,' Emile's in steering-wheel revenge, Canoness' always, Grandmother's most terribly in bed that awful day—had ignited in me a flaming hate of hate. . . .

Without rest or respite I was now taken from one plane of consciousness to another, from the *n*th dream within a shuddering dream to that staring over-wideawakeness as compared to which our ordinary consciousness is the *n*th shuddering dream within a dream.

Everywhere he made me see sin indescribable, which everywhere tempted me. Horrors far beyond the power of the sane soul to conceive ; but all of them real, alive within this cosmos, lurking near the gateway of your soul and mine. To-day I can only remember and recreate what happened on planes nearest the earth ; happenings with symbols the coarsest, whereof the danger and spiritual evil were proportionately least.

It begins in my memory suddenly.

"We have only tonight together," he was saying, "you and I, Monsieur Lee: only tonight. Tomorrow Julian is sure to send the car to fetch you, whether old Grandmother has gone to her heaven or not. . . . She who called down the Curse. Who turned my love-child nature into hate. Who closed it to happiness; who opened it to sin. For whose sake I sold my spirit to perdition that she too might perish."

"Perish?" I found voice to say. "She was a hundred years old a few days ago—and even if she dies to-day, as that telegram makes it seem possible——"

"You believe in that telegram then?"

"——Even so, death at a hundred is no special perdition."

"She will not die to-day. 'The second night from now.'"

"Even so——"

"Even so! And will go, like I who go there myself that she too may go, to the middle of the heart of the fiend."

His face was black with hate, the Devil tight within him near bursting his skin, Who, possessing him physically, would have borne him off spiritually too, and have thus fulfilled His pact, had it not been that the time was not yet, and that hate now gave way to fear: "But—why—why am I talking so much of old Grandmother? Because——," and fear now gave place to anguish: "Look!" he cried, "she's seeking to pass into Heaven!" He pointed upwards and stared through the vaulted roof, as though watching Grandmother's soul seeking to pass through the firmament—and anguish turned to glee as his eyes came earthwards again and he called "Not yet, not yet!" and glee (anticipating both Grandmother's destruction through Satan and his own escape through Emmanuel) to new devilish intent as he came back to earth and to me.

". . . I was saying? Ah, yes, that the car is sure to be back tomorrow. Therefore we have but one night together. I don't want you to leave my roof without having tasted hospitality that when I was a man, not slave, I should have been ashamed not to offer. You hear?—*not slave.*"

"It's very kind of you. A slave?"

"Of His. *His!*" he shouted. "As you may be before long; before this night is over." He fixed his eyes on me,

passed their madness for a moment into mine ; but I was able to pass it back. For side by side with the knowledge that the last peril was ever nearer, a sense of coming release subsisted.

I wondered how salvation could appear.

I was not awarely aware that, the whole background and foreground of my consciousness this night being a fight to save my own soul, so long as this was so I was doomed to lose it ; nor that the experiences of this year, and despite many a backsliding my Godward progress therethrough, had made me just worthy, just capable of choosing the loss of my own soul.

Which choice means salvation. The moment of choice presents itself mystically, but the fact of choice is real—real on all planes of consciousness—and the chances (ideally) even.

“ —As I was saying, it’s only tonight I may have the pleasure of your company. Let us amuse ourselves, mundanely.”

He led the way to another room, alcoved apart. I have vague notions of its general appearance. There were books chiefly. In one corner was a baized table, with packs of cards. Other tables were laden with wines and sweetmeats and fruits, incongruous in this place. A large wall-mirror hung above the table. Each wall-space between the shabby bookcases was hung with voluptuous pictures of naked and half-naked fat eastern women : fleshpots of Egypt. Pictures which my eyes both shunned and sought ; sidled away from, squinted back at.

“ Come, sit down to cards and supper. Let’s play while we eat and talk while we play and die while we talk. One of us may go tonight. You know that ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ It may be the shell of your soul in the vacant choirstall tomorrow, or it may be mine.”

“ What choir stall ? ”

“ In His church. Soon I take you there. First let us play for each other’s souls.”

You, Emmanuel Lee, a human being, Englishman ; born at Barnstaple, Devon, twenty one years ago ; you, a human being (what does that MEAN ?) are sitting with a giant who has

stuffed you he is the Devil, and who now would play cards for your soul!!! Fee-faw-fum! What cheap-jackery, madness, muck! . . . Then black flooding certitude that it was true, and that the gaming and the cards were cruellest of all symbols to mock me, by seeming stagey and unreal when real they were. . . .

"Not for souls," I cried. "For money!"

He accepted my preference so eagerly that at once I suspected worse danger than in his own, and sought a way out.

"Stay, I've no money, or only a rouble or two."

A lie. I felt in my pockets, and they were real, and were bulging with Sebastyan-envied swag, Praz payment, my wage as Professor of English.

"Here then, for hospitality's sake, do me the honour of accepting this present, or loan if you prefer. If—it's—you—who—go" (he spaced his words now so widely that a hundred thoughts huddled between each), "I shall recoup myself. If I go, I shall not miss it."

He produced from his pocket a handful of gold and notes: over a thousand roubles I hastily, hectically reckoned. A thousand roubles—stand up and triumph!—or near £108 in those Romanoff days before the Devil had come to destroy or had wearied of buttressing—take your choice, choose freely—the ancient Muscovite Empire. I, who had never had twenty pounds in my hand. No, Emmanuel: once. Rose-garden lady, you remember; that five hundred franc note. True. Five hundred francs for my body, one thousand roubles for my soul. Witty, oh witty! I sniggered.

He looked quickly, looked away.

Facing each other across that walnut card-table, discussing minor differences in rules—"As you please"—"Well, I've always played that way"—"Well then, let's split the difference"—"Right then: tens beat kings"—"Except in the last eight tricks"—cutting for the first deal, picking up new cards: surely we were in Sanity Land. But so awful was the speed with which our souls could cover the infinity, the hairs-breadth, to Terror, that we felt no safety. I felt none, and watching him I knew that he was in like case.

The game was Polish *bélique*. With just sufficient setbacks and reverses to prove to me that success was due to my

skill and marvellousness, I won unceasingly, insolently, as never before—or, alas, since. As my heart swelled with pride, so must my eyes have glittered with greed. Like a Monte neurotic I snatched at my winnings, watched them, kept counting them, caressed them.

He plied me with food and drink. I helped myself greedily from the better bottles—cognac, Imperial vodka, kummel—for which, thank the Lord, I was not paying; all of it, thank Heaven, on the cheap. I smacked my lips, appraised pontifically, paraded knowledge of years and vainglorious vintages; grabbed at the daintier sweetmeats, grabbed swiftly for more; stuffed my mouth full to bursting; gobbled, wolfed.

I knew I was coarsening, and rejoiced; cried 'Farce, Melodrama, Bathos! Eat, drink and be merry!' snapped my fingers at danger and decency both. Then relapsed into unawareness, lost track of my soul.

One of the hounds lying near my feet stirred in its sleep. I kicked it savagely, delighting; did not reflect how such an act could not be my own, since alike physical courage and physical cruelty are qualities, one as little as the other, the gods when I came here gave me; did not realise, did not know.

I was winning continuously; conceit, contempt, avarice all grew bolder. I hardly bothered to look at the cards, looked instead beyond the other at the libidinous shapes behind him; rejoiced in them, responded to them; would have bidden them take flesh and blood, come down from the wall to be with me.

All these degenerate childishnesses—my ugly gambling, uglier guzzling, and the rest—were, I suppose, what was happening. They were physical symbols of what was happening:—inside me, in my most separate, most secret soul. Shadows of uncomprehended forces, like every act of every creature in the world. At once farcical and fearful: like being born, like dying.

I looked towards the mirror on the left. Quick, it might help you to cheat. With a little shifting of my chair I found

that this could be managed, and saw all his cards ; trebled the rate of my winning, and of my race to evil.

Presently I saw that in the mirror no hand was grasping the cards ; no hand at all was reflected, no arm, no body, no face ; only the cards coming out and down and up as he played. I looked back, away from the mirror, and he was there.

Any moment of my life before I should have been numb with terror. Now it struck me as funny, like a conjuring trick.

My own face in the mirror. Ah that was funnier. The small mouth was bigger, and the lips evil. Manly now, that mouth, I call it. Not that girl-face, priest-face——

The game went on. Sin spread through my blood in warm tides. I no longer apprehended external things. There were none to apprehend. Eternity had stopped ticking. Second death of the world. . . .

The game, I suppose, went on ; for what number of hours I cannot surmise. The game, I suppose went on. I do not know, do not remember. . . .

Into his face, into my heart swept the Unnameable ; swept us together to our feet.

HE WAS THE DEVIL.

Howling I clutched him by the wrists ; howling I kept him at bay.

*

*

*

We left go of each other, and limply collapsed back into our chairs.

The direct assault upon my soul had failed ; the second woe was past.

But I was spent and shivering.

After a very long while I began to apprehend again the world I was in ; very slowly a sense of my surroundings filled me, a sense at once acute and unfamiliarly matter-of-fact.

I saw the world as an ordinary clear-headed person with a stay-at-home soul sees it. For the first time that night—that summer—awareness and normalness were at high tide together.

And I saw that he was a man, not a demon.

He was a giant all right, huge-limbed, huge-handed, but

ungainly rather than terrifying, as I watched him there, huddled back, chest hunched in, face forward. The face was ghastly white, ravaged by what he had gone through, reminding me of the only creature I ever saw (a nearest kinsman) in the moment that follows epilepsy. The large head, covered wig-like with a fleece of black hair. The face hairy : long dark lashes and brows and bushy side-whiskers, but no moustache. An eighteen-thirty July Monarchy appearance ; some resemblance, indeed, to old Pear Head himself.

He said nothing, was thinking nothing, was nothing. An empty poor vessel through which the universe tempest had raged.

(Civilised man knows nothing, but if I had known how, in a trice I could have killed him.)

The place, too, was real. Through a stone archway that connected the two rooms I could see part of his writing table, the human skull paper-weight that stood thereon, and on the wall above, black-signed and fluttering, a woven white goëtic banner.

I started when, after the long silence, he spoke ; in a plain human voice.

" Tired ? Perhaps you want sleep. But later you'll come to church."

" What church ? "

" His, I told you. Service isn't till two, and it's not midnight yet."

" Not midnight ! I have been here for ever."

" I know."

" You know ? "

" Yes, with me for ever, but in the dungeon of this derelict old hunting-box in Russian Poland, whose name you don't know, only a few hours. It is a quarter to twelve. You might like to lie down for a bit and sleep. I will show you your bedroom.

" No, you're a human being now, and there's a lull, and for a little span, I think, no danger. So tell me your story."

As he related, first I angered against his childhood's tormentors, and from my heart pitied him ; then, as too prolixly he began pitying himself, my pity gave way to dislike. Next,

as he skirted his own iniquities, and with monomaniac stare into emptiness interminably talked aloud to himself of escaping his Pact—escape, escape, escape!—I disliked him for his weary egotism, his harping ‘What must he do to be saved?’; then, suddenly, took to pitying him again for his ill-luck in that so egotistical he was.

Wearied egotism? *Tu quoque*, Dom Manuel.

And to stop myself seeing how like him I was, I cut in (there was no peril at the moment; we were empty vessels; the words were only words): “And *I* then am your way of salvation?”

“Yes,” he said reflectingly, “it’s you or it’s me. There’s no choice, is there? Chance and eternity have ranged us together; and one of us must go forth to be damned. To save myself, I must damn you. There’s no choice.”

“There is!” I cried, beginning to see.

After another silence, he got up, and I followed as he led me across the enchanting-room, along the sixty-paced passage, up the black twenty steps, out into the courtyard—and the still night, and the harvest moon, and all the autumn stars.

Then through another door he led me up to my bedroom, in a kind of loft.

At the door he left me.

“Sleep until I return.”

I locked the door and, without undressing, lay down on the bed, pulled the quilt over me, protected my heart with my hands.

The two hours alone were but further nightmare, the last advance to the terror-line. I was alone with the awfulest enemy; not Bethlehem, not Satan Assailant, but Myself.

Evil unleashed in the air; dark shapes before and behind. Steps and creakings all around, soon the high tide of terror within: the Chase again and the Battle. Sometimes running for dear life, sometimes scarce able to drag one foot after the leaden other, I passed through the valley of the shadow, fleeing always from those shapes behind: Russians, Cossacks; his dogs whom I heard yapping without (for the moon was flawless); his dwarf; himself; fearing always the crags and bottomless chasms on either side of the narrowing path, and with my nails and feet clambering savagely for salvation to the

top of his castle-tower, which shot up for ever through space that I might fall for ever down, through space for ever, passing white staring suns, scorching nebulae, then emptiness in the cold universe beyond the universe where space is time and there is neither, but only the second death . . . now life again, running again through the grey valley, pursued by the phantom of the second life, which, too, is everlasting ; life eternal with myself, who soon would be the Devil, let but the fiend behind gain a step, catch hold, envelop.

Ah, sooner Devil Bethlehem than Devil Lee. I got up and rushed for the door, sprang into the passage outside. I stumbled, falling across some shape which, in picking myself up, I could see was a little wicker basket, placed just outside my door. Sprawling for leverage, I felt some shape wriggling, heard some creature sniggering, under me. I screamed ; Ganska's cackle echoed.

He was ringing the changes.

Clambering somehow back over him into the room, I locked myself in, flung myself again on the bed and, as though never interrupted, resumed eternal flight, flight from myself eternal.

At last my soul won escape from my body, and hovering, surveyed the chase : the pale wraith-body which was me, pursued across the worlds, across non-space, by Him Who was the Devil : by MYSELF.

He caught the shuddering wraith, I felt his claws closing on my shoulder, and fear for my body clutched at my soul, when a third shape stepped between us and gave battle for me. I had no dimensions ; the fight raged through my body. Raged soon victoriously. Apollyon was trodden under foot, and my Saviour turned the light of his countenance upon me.

It was the Lichfield ' gipsy.'

Who instantly vanished, crowded out by Mrs. Salt's ghost-guests : Mrs. Vallandingham clapping her hands and shouting " He will see you through " ; Mrs. Dobson Drew crooning " Marvellous ! Mystical ! " ; the distinguished-looking lady in the big black hat (I had rejoiced at her discomfiture), threatening " I will call the Devil back," and screaming insults. " Here he is, here he is ! " she gloated, and a dark shape loomed up and blotted her out.

In the middle of this dark shadow, "Come to church" seemed to be sounding. But the words were somehow wrong. Not "Meeting-time, Emmanuel," nor "Come along: Chapel!" Though that was what they meant.

Was it Aunt? Was it Uncle? No, Bethlehem towering above me, his great jowl lighted up by the candle he held.

"Venez à l'église,"—it was the French that had sounded queer. "I'll give you ten minutes to get dressed, then come back for you," he said; and went out.

Two things now happened. First, there came to me a clear and perfect apprehension of the position I was in: a this-world understanding of my other-world plight. Second, in that strange place and instant my ancient diary-mania asserted itself, and I tore the fly-leaf, and, when that was all scribbled over, the blank back page too from my pocket Testament—placed for safety (my safety) under my pillow—and in pencil, in tiniest script, wrote thereon by candlelight of the moment as I perceived it.

The two faint-pencilled sheets are still in my possession, and for myself at any rate are proofs, testimonies, vouchers. And charters of salvation too; sovereignly evocative of that strange moment in which I wrote:

PLACE UNKNOWN:

September the 8(?)th 1913:

One in the morning.

CONSIDERATIONS OF MY 'REAL' SELF

1. After what I have been through this year, I believe: (a) in the reality of God and of Evil as two separate Kings of the Universe; (b) that all of us who belong to what we call the human race are stuff of each of these Two; (c) that in the end (as in the beginning?) we shall belong entirely to One or the Other; (d) that our fate as touching (c) may sometimes be made known to us by direct visitation of God or Satan, or through intermediaries of Theirs, good and bad, conscious and unconscious; (e) that Quince and Nellie were for me such intermediaries.

2. Sane at this moment as I write—I mean by 'sane' feeling physically within me the same equilibrium as in all my remembered life before these latter days—I note down that, as with daft trilles, so with graver things, almost all the Q. and N. forespeakings have come true. Visitant from abroad, voyage over the sea, far country, strange folk, castle, dwarf, castle on hill, dwarf again, giant, fear, EVIL.

3. Almost all. Why then have I been shown all things forespoken

but Salvation? Why, for example, has the young gipsy, my brother, whom I saw again in vision just now, alone not also in flesh appeared? Voice aloud within me: He will appear. (I believe this.)

4. And appearing, will he SAVE ME?—‘Save me’: Thou Fool. Thou canst save others, thyself thou canst not save. . . .

Dare you lose your own soul?—I dare nearly—I dare.

For whom: Romany-face that I saw through two wombs once? No, he is speaking from heaven in my ear. Rather (another hand writing) his part will be to tell you *whom* you must save.

Can you face eternal death—*i.e.*, eternal life—to save Another Soul?

Can you—*his* steps on the stairs. Must stop. Quick, write first (other hand guiding): Love your enemies—them that spitefully use you—

Just in time I stuffed the little sheets into a waistcoat pocket.

I followed him to the door; past the watch-dwarf, who stood up and saluted the Master as we passed; down the stairs; out into the night, and the harvest moon, and all the autumn stars.

CHAPTER XIX : THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

As our two bodies crossed the courtyard, yet four of us there seemed to be.

Two of me walking down a footpath through dark meadows, into a narrowing valley alongside a stream : two of me walking and talking to each other, one cowering with terror before the climax of terror now at hand, the other tremulous with excitement and subconscious expectation of sacrifice soon to be chosen ; teeth chattering, heart frozen ; whooping, heart lirting with hope ; each self aware of the other, and at the moment it crossed the other for its turn in the central place of me aware also of the doubleness in the other body walking two yards ahead : one of him still pursuing his miserable mad-man's plan, by fear and magic to achieve his escape and my overthrow ; the other a self long dead, tremulous with excitement and subconscious expectation of sacrifice soon to be chosen . . .

Which ' I ' was stronger in each ? Which I, and which he ?

The path widened. We were walking abreast across a meadow, and I exulted to find that when, running fool's risks, for the first time that night I prayed my eyes into courage through the moonlight for fixing his, it was his that first lost courage to stay. Whereupon a cool flame of gladness from our mad sister the moon flickered in me, flared up and searched me, scorched up the cravener self, burnt before it all the filthinesses and fearfulnesses of these nightmare months, and gave me a sense as it were of exolution, and I seemed to shed fear as a garment. Whereafter awhile so little was I the Emmanuel of all these narrated days, that it did not strike me that his looking away might be feigned, to lure me on, that in this care-free state might lie the ultimate danger. But being devoid of fear I could not fear its absence ; I was unaware, a

Lelewel ; and it was from a great distance, as through the memory of some one else, that I saw all the magic and madness, and this cortege of shadows (mediums and Paris folk and Praz folk) and immaterial bogeys and wisps o' the will, and the position poor Emmanuel Lee was in. Either light of fearlessness, entering me, had blinded my eyes to the darkness around and ahead, or Darkness, summoning Light as a decoy, had for His own ends provoked this detached and fear-free state.

We plunged into a forest, into utmost night.

After a while we came as suddenly again into moonlight.

I saw that we were in a clearing in the forest shaped like a Christian temple, perhaps forty yards long by twenty or thirty broad. All around, the black trees formed a closed wall, without break—I could not see or guess where ended the path we had come by—towering, tapering inwards to the midnight sky, so that the open starlit roof was smaller than the turfed floor.

Hidden in the inmost black heart of a forest, impenetrable by any save those who know the secret pathway, this chapel dedicated to the Lord of Terror may have been there from the earliest days of Evil ; for all the armies that have since rolled backwards and forwards, may be there still ; may remain there through unhurrying ages till God has driven all sin from the universe and the black worship is shrineless, till the earth grows cold and all life dies hereon, till space and time are over.

Skirting the tree-wall, I followed behind him for a few steps—and then my eyes beheld.

Two rows of white tombstones, squatted whereon, reclining against the headstones, were human skeletons.

“Come to church, Emmanuel !” the four of us cried together ; a discord of devil’s mockery, fear’s pitiful boldface squeak, and triumphal invitation from two of us, Christ in the two of us.

Fear, now back again, was the most physically voiced. Because I had forgotten His existence, He now took me more instantly than any time ever in the worlds before, more totally and more terribly. My fists were clenched to bleeding.

By enchantment he dragged my body forward between the white choristers—mere tumbled-in little mounds of bones, I think, at the lower end, faultless white grinning skeletons as

we advanced ; though I looked never a hairsbreadth to the right nor the left of me and only saw them then, as I see them now, on the shuddering margin of vision—and made me follow him, dumb with fear, to the stone altar at the upper end. Hereabouts we stopped.

The last tombstone on the right, by which we were standing, had no guest. My soul now wanted to turn towards and my eyes to look at the last stone on the opposite side, but he stopped me, and pointed instead with his stick to the empty stone (my throne to be) and then to its neighbour, the last tombstone but one on the same side. This was not untenanted, but the occupant was tiny, newer to death than the others, with flesh still on the bones, not yet attained to the full white glory of skeletonhood.

It was the hunched-up corpse of a horribly mutilated child, whose little head came not halfway up the stone behind him. The upper half of the headstone was covered with letters, Polish letters scrawled in the innocent's blood :

Suffer little children to come unto Me.

He cried it in me. I cried it aloud. The last woe seized me, and I was bathed in terror, gleaming molten heat of terror, a magnetized atom without mind or will, without power to aid, even in most piteous degree, the Powers now finally disputing me.

Inhuman, he twirled round, described with the wand a great circle that stayed there on the ground, phosphorescent, on the edge whereof I found myself tottering ; into the middle whereof, in a voice that was Sin and Hell made audible, he bade me step : " There, go there. Kneel. Cry ' I adore Thee, Satan ! ' "

The magic smote me to my knees. Evil rushed in through every vein and pore until almost I *was* the Devil.

Almost.

But in a corner, back to the wall, wall of my soul, fighting for it, God held out against the intruding fiend.

At the place of their battle was instantly conceived, and grew, and grew mighty, a loathing of myself, horrible, nameless, beyond sane conception even ; behind it, driving this hate forward against that evil, moved God ; processional three within me.

A voice—voice in the celestial sense, not heard save through the spirit, but in so far as it had physical content coming it seemed from the tomb he had forbidden me to look at—said : “ Cry ‘ I adore Thee, *Christ !* ’ ”, giving the words, at the last moment as hate chased evil and God hate, to my lips for salvation’s sake to utter.

As heart and mouth apprehended the redemption word, approached it, Evil was being flung forth and with Him the loathing, and heavenly light came in, and my soul was a bright flame, colour of gladness, not the cold light of reasoned hope or argued expectation of deliverance, which has the colour of light but not its warmth ; light shining into my soul, bearing away my soul, drawing me up into the sky, making luminous together my body and the night around it, transporting me to a lambent place like Heaven.

All this while I was still on my knees on the edge of the visible ring, still accomplishing the adoration phrase. The whole myriad-detailed vision that follows took place before I had achieved it ; coincided therefore with a bare half-second of earthly time. I, too, was outside the time-plane, and only know what took place from the apocalyptic instant of my return to this world. There were no words, nor can I in words convey the noetic reality of the presence, nor paradisaal freedom from the senses, visionary speed and perfectness of comprehension ; nor how, though I was away from the earth spiritually, I was still in it physically, still seeing the tree-walled chapel, the tombstones, but seeing them for what they were, a nightmare picture of a world behind them, while I who beheld was in another, a world of light. But in using the notation of language to portray what returning I brought with me, at the threshold moment still saw, I believe that what I have turned from wordlessness into words may for at least some who will read me *turn back*.

The moment I left the world, my eyes sought the tombstone whence the Lord had seemed to come. I saw there, garmenting seated bones, a luminous body, a youth’s, in shape and texture perfect, yet transparent as crystal ; and, through the body, a remembered soul.

The same I had seen Lichfield night beyond Quince, and

had saved. The same I remembered also from before and outside this life, when the mothers who bore us had spoken together.

In space we were ten or twelve yards apart, but side by side in the barrierless world. Not this world. For though the spiritualists would put it that he, spirit-gipsy, had come back to earth to help me, as I felt it rather was it he who had summoned me to Heaven.

My soul's first cry on seeing the spirit I am calling 'Romany' (whom a subconscious 'that it might be fulfilled' desire *made* to be Romany, in materialistic moods I have since tried to tell myself) was this: "It is he who is saving me."

At the word 'save' as my heart said it, at the complacent vision of salvation, I fell—for self-love rules in the hells—with purgatorial swiftness down the pit to hell that yawns at the very gates of heaven: to a place where what I saw, which always had the same outward shapes, was so gross that even the 'real' world, the middle world through which I had passed in falling, was in comparison a spiritual impalpable thing. Thence, with the smoke of the pit blinding my eyes, I saw Romany far away, fading into nothingness.

"He is hallucination; he is not there. Thine eyes deceive thee . . . Why was thy soul so precious, more so than hundreds of millions of others? Hundreds of millions of others . . . Isn't it stretching too far the law of probability, long arm of coincidence? . . .

"Reach hither thy hand," up at heaven's gate he said.

I reached out, but could feel nothing; only emptiness. Oh send me faith!

". . . Probable? What does it mean? When you were born into the world there were hundreds of millions of possible mothers to bear you. Hundreds of millions of mothers. Wasn't it improbable—'coincidence'—the word you said—that any one of those hundreds of millions should be *the* one? Why were you born of whom you were born, and an English boy? Why are you *you*? Your long words have no meaning in heaven. Things are or are not. From the beginning God had magicked together your evening in England there with that evening in Poland here. You saved me when, not loving your life as well as mine, you offered to lose it. That is truth

in heaven. Now I am saving you. That is truth in heaven. Be not faithless, but believing."

"I believe : in you and in God Who sent you. I BELIEVE,"—and I rose up again spacelessly from the depths ; the smoke that had dimmed my eyes was vanished, and Romany a yard away.

I : "Why are you here to help me ?"

Vision : "Because you first helped me. We have been in the same waggon before. Twenty two your-world years ago. I had my time in your one of the worlds because of you."

Then 'followed' my vision of the dead youth's life, all the full years of it (known to me by no other way) being seen and remembered in my waking-second of return.

There being no words, these hereunder are but Borrow'd plumes.

"I was alive for twenty one years. Borne into your world by a mother you remember. Her father was an English Romany, but her mother of the people of the Gitános, the gipsies of Spain. Soon after I was born my father died, and Mammy longed to see again her mother's people, sickened for them until when I was six years old she took me with her and we walked down England, crossed the water, walked through the whole land of France, then west of the Big Mountains by the old Romany road into Spain. There, after many wanderings, Mammy found that her folk had crossed the Middle Sea into Africa, into the country of the Moors. Thither we followed them, and with them we lived. My mother was revered as a great sorceress, though she had the white magic only and worshipped the Good Spirit. She taught me the true Gitáno magic, all that a child and a male may know. . . . When I was nine years old she died. In dying she told me of you : how your mother had saved me, and how she, my mother, knowing that you were a spirit that could but with hardship cross into the world, in her travail with me worked the spell for you that you might be born and your mother rewarded ; and foretold that, as always when mother saves mother from sonlessness, the sons would help to save each other from the Prince of Darkness, cheated by their coming into life. 'He will save you, and still will live. If, in saving

him, you die : what matter ?—The world your eyes see is a lie : you will come back but the sooner to the real one and to me.’—After she died, the kinsfolk treated me ill. And when there came a giant from the north, who went among the Romany to learn their secrets, and used me kindly and enticed me with golden promises, I abandoned the tribe for ever and followed him in his wanderings through the world. We journeyed over Africa ; where the French are, in the country of Carthage, and in our land of origin beside the pyramids and the Nile. We came to Europe, and lived in cities. He taught me reading and writing and foreign tongues ; and I taught him many spells ; though never the real *bahi*. I became his clerk and body-servant, yet never, though by darkness and by light he sought to force me, would I worship his Lord : of Whose Pact with him he had told me the first day he took me away.”

Then the antique Karolean story—of power beyond the pale of righteousness longed for, and proffered and bought. In the case of the ‘Count Bethlehem Zvelly-Velly’ power to work ill on whom he hated, who had begun by more cruelly hating him. In his child’s heart had flared up a fire of savagest hate, that devoured him. At last, when a little older, he went on his knees and called to Satan for help to do them despite ; Who heard his call ; and twenty years ago the Covenant had been signed in this castle, now fallen into ruin and become the home of every unclean spirit. One by one his enemies died miserably ; for he had bought the power to hate them unto death. Except old Grandmother, whose hate did equal battle with his own, “because maybe she had signed—even if unknown to her waking self—her own same Pact.”

Of his hate of the Saviour : that renegade Jew who had died for the Gentiles, Whose face he had tattoo’d on the soles of his feet so that with each step he took he might trample upon Him. Of the power of his Master riveted on his soul, which soon, for the twenty years of the covenant were almost spent, the Master would come back to claim. Of the return three years before from the southern cities to this abandoned place, and the life there, given over entirely to ever more feverish struggles to escape the bond, one day by cruelties beyond naming, which he hoped his Prince might find so sweet

in His sight that He would waive His rights to his soul ; next day by using the sorceries taught him by his Lord to seek to transfer that lordship to another. Of how on peasants, old witches, children, on one after another he tried ; but always *Christ !* to Whom they cried at the last moment of terror came to rescue their souls : whereupon for revenge he murdered their bodies, torturing them first in a hundred fearful ways, thereby to placate the Master he had sought to desert. Of the sins crying to high heaven for vengeance ; the pure in heart corrupted, the good souls turned to evil, the children twisted and slain. . . .

“ The Russian police were bewitched into blindness, into believing whatever my master might tell them, his Master whispering it to him. And no one knows of this temple ; no one, except by hushed hearsay in the villages, of the masses and the murders. There is no village within ten versts, and all the farms that are nearer are deserted now. . . .

“ Now comes the day when, after long years of crime and failure, he bethought him to do what always, under my heart, I had feared ; the day when he turned his hopes on me. It was last Holy Thursday. He wrought his greatest wizardry. With every art of the Devil’s, he strove to place the Devil in me. As I watched the evils accomplished before me—I will not speak of them,” (but I, Emmanuel, saw them all)—“ as I withstood the sorceries, but knew I could not hold out for ever, I saw far away somewhere else in this world the Devil assailing another human soul, and I saw the face of the soul. My mother’s foretold one : you. His ring was around me, and the last fear. Then I saw that into your soul Christ’s had entered. It was Christ’s Own ! And I was delivered, and the ring faded, and the world.

“ When at last I awoke, it was to find that I was still in the same world. Why, balked of my soul, had he spared my body ? I was soon to know.

“ One day, taken unawares, I was thrown into trance. There he made me describe to him the earthly habitation of the spirit that had saved me, a mixture of memory and what Mammy had told me and things my wandering spirit saw. I spoke of a youth in far-away England. I told your age. I painted the city where your body lived, a place of learning and

spires. I pointed, with magnetised arm, to the city where you had been when you saved me. 'Someone who can save men from the Devil!' he cried with a great cry. '*Me too he shall save!*' And rose up and slew me. . . .

"And I am dead; and alive for evermore. Since the hour of my death I have watched over you"—. Then the tale of the quest for Emmanuel; how, knowing nothing of England nor England's speech, nor any of its people, Faust learnt from his books that it was his half-brother, Prince Julian Lelewel, his only visitor from the Christian world outside, who was to be the witless means of bringing me to him; how the need of the English speech, of an Englishman, of me, had been implanted in spell-bound Julian; of the latter's journey to England; how Twardowski's eyes had seen across Europe his arrival, his meeting with me; of my beguilement, of his final persuading of me at Oxford when he whispered 'Choose freely; choose freely'; of my departure from England, of my arrival at Praz, of Julian's half-conscious endeavours to prevent himself bringing me hither, endeavours easily exorcised.

"And now you are come. And are redeemed. And so must give redemption. He marked you for Satan: mark him for *Christ!*"

The word as (vanishing from my sight) he uttered it, became the word as I uttered it.

Achieving the redemption-phrase I rose from my knees, went forward to the man of stature over against me; in mine I took his enchanter's hands, and passed to him the Love of God.

I felt accomplishing itself within him the miracle, and my spirit joined in the celestial tumult of God's victory.

As he fell at my feet, "Salvation" I said; speaking the word aloud, and in dear English.

"But come quickly," he answered, "the mystery of God must be finished"; and rose up and led me by the hand, out of the chapel, along the secret pathway through the forest, returning to the castle and the desolate courtyard, now filled with the beginnings of dawn. A horse was saddled; around

us the dogs and the dwarf and other evil spirits I had not earlier seen bayed and cowered and menaced ; ghouls dis-companied, surrounding their departing lord.

I hoist myself in the stirrups and take place behind him and clasp his belt as we ride through the ghouls and away.

CHAPTER XX : HARVEST HOME —THE DEVIL'S

Through morning mist over vague plains under vague watery skies the colour of Eternity, through which for ever I was riding.

Riding for ever : but part of For Ever and so fearing it not.
At peace with God.

Riding : I had ridden across Europe and found salvation, ridden in cars orgilous and lowlier trains, ridden through evil and behind him and before ; near many new souls, past many new shapes and shiftings of this visual world.

Riding now with Bethlehem, soon to be not least among the saints of Juda ; on horseback, horseback through space for ever . . .

Dream-halt and dream-food at dream-wayside-inn. Then out, and up, and away, hurling new vastnesses behind us. Grey watery skies above ; then rain ; then darkness ; then black night.

New halt ; dream-supper and dream-bed ; fear-free bed at last.

Up again and away.

The new forenoon through which we rode turned soon from grey to pearl, pearl to primrose, primrose to gold.

Serene Indian summer : gold-amiced autumn wearing spring's heart upon his sleeve : blithe second-childhood of the year. Laughing warm world to race through.

On such days light is warmly diffused in all parts of the heavens, emanating from God Himself.

Through His heavens we were riding ; through the sun. Careering peacefully through a universe of gold.

After a great while, the gold became scarlet and flamelike, and at the same time less circumferential : narrowing swiftly to a pillar of fire ahead of us, with darkness around. Pillar of

flame now no longer the colour of the sun, but colour of the fire of the pit.

Straight into the fire we were riding ; it blazed and dazzled my eyes ; was ever nearer, bigger, more gloom-encircled, as it were a great mountain burning with fire.

Then we stopped dead. Had we come to the end of Eternity ?

“ Wake up ! Get down.” He turned in the saddle and shook me. “ I am come HOME ! ”

I awoke, alighted, saw.

The flame was a great bonfire in the front meadow, lighting into wonder the white walls of the house I so well knew. Ranged round on the grass stood trestle-tables strewn with the remains of a great feast. Couples who had been dancing stopped, came apart, peered at the two visitants ; bowed and smiled to me, gazed wonder-struck at my giant brother.

Oh parody perfect : Tenth of September, Saint Sergius', Zwan's saint-day ; ' Harvest Home of the Devil's,' true travesty of the Lord's ; with peasant feast and bonfire and dancing, and, now at imminent midnight awaited, ghost benediction from the steps.

The Saint and his Adorer, flickering ten yards away on the circle of the fire, were of my Praz people alone to be seen (Julian and Karol being departed for Fear Castle to fetch me back, Weronika retired to bed)—and these two were coming forward with I know not what word of strange greeting when the bells struck heart-of-the-night, and on the balcony, punctual to the stroke to return the compliment of six days before, appeared, alone but for the trivial Sabbatyn, clad again in her Amazon rags, battle-axed, outlandish—the dying phantom of the Grandmother.

He ran forward, flung himself at her feet crying : “ *Babka ! Babka !* ” (Grandmother) ; swathed her with tears and love.

She perceived ; gave an inhuman cry.

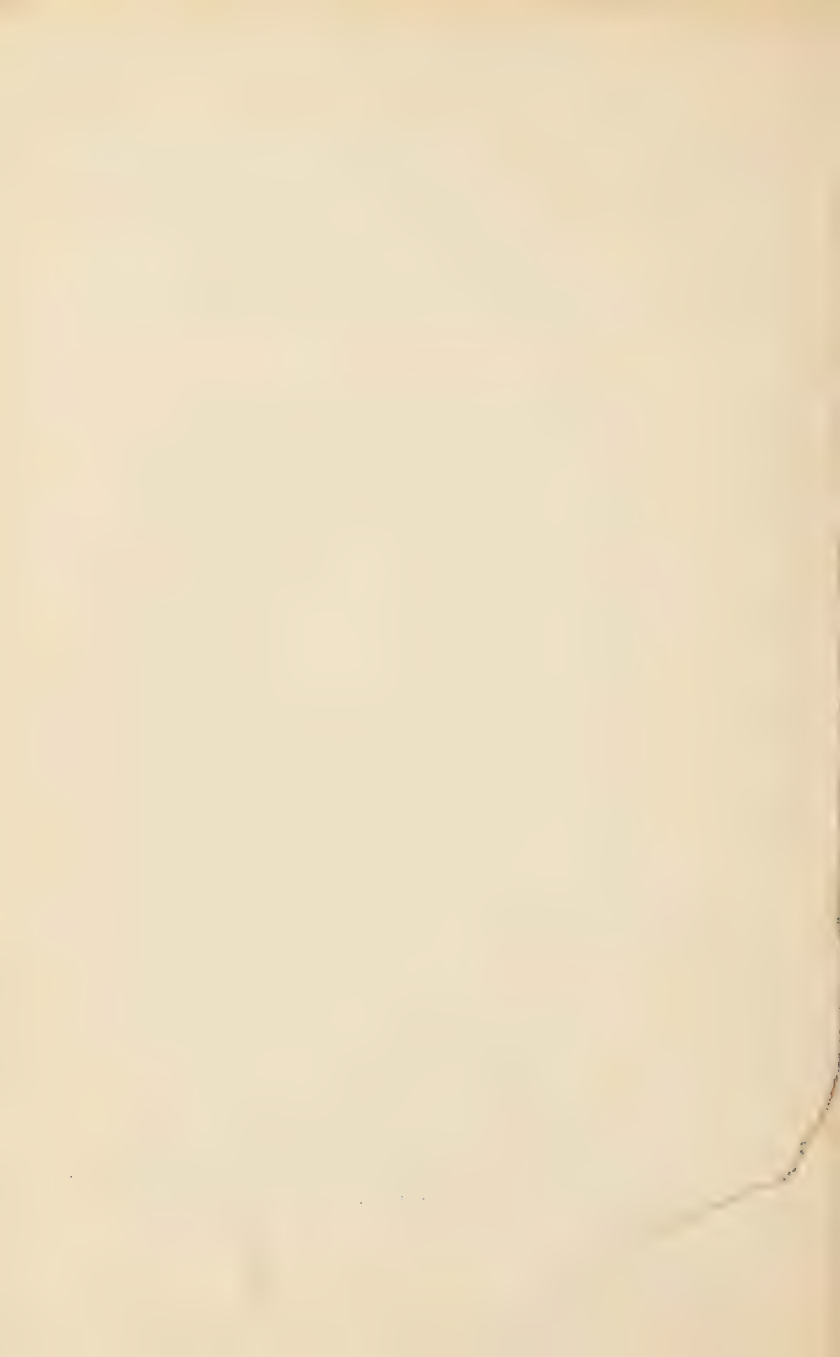
In the flames' light her face was possessed of the Devil.

Who lifted her arm and with it the antique axe ; brought it down cruelly on the prostrate child of forgiveness at her feet. Hate came into His Own.

Up through the night I saw his white soul parted from him and carried into Heaven, while the other, like a wild beast, form and face too awful to behold, as the swine of Galilee towards the waters rushed past us towards the great fire, into whose heart she flung herself with lamentable cry, and body incinerable and soul immortal in fearful concretion, there perished in the flames ; departed, the one to Heaven, the other to everlasting fire ; to God, to Lucifer—to the twin spirits of the Universe.

There is no Universe.

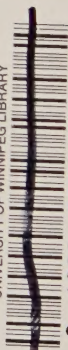
THE END





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